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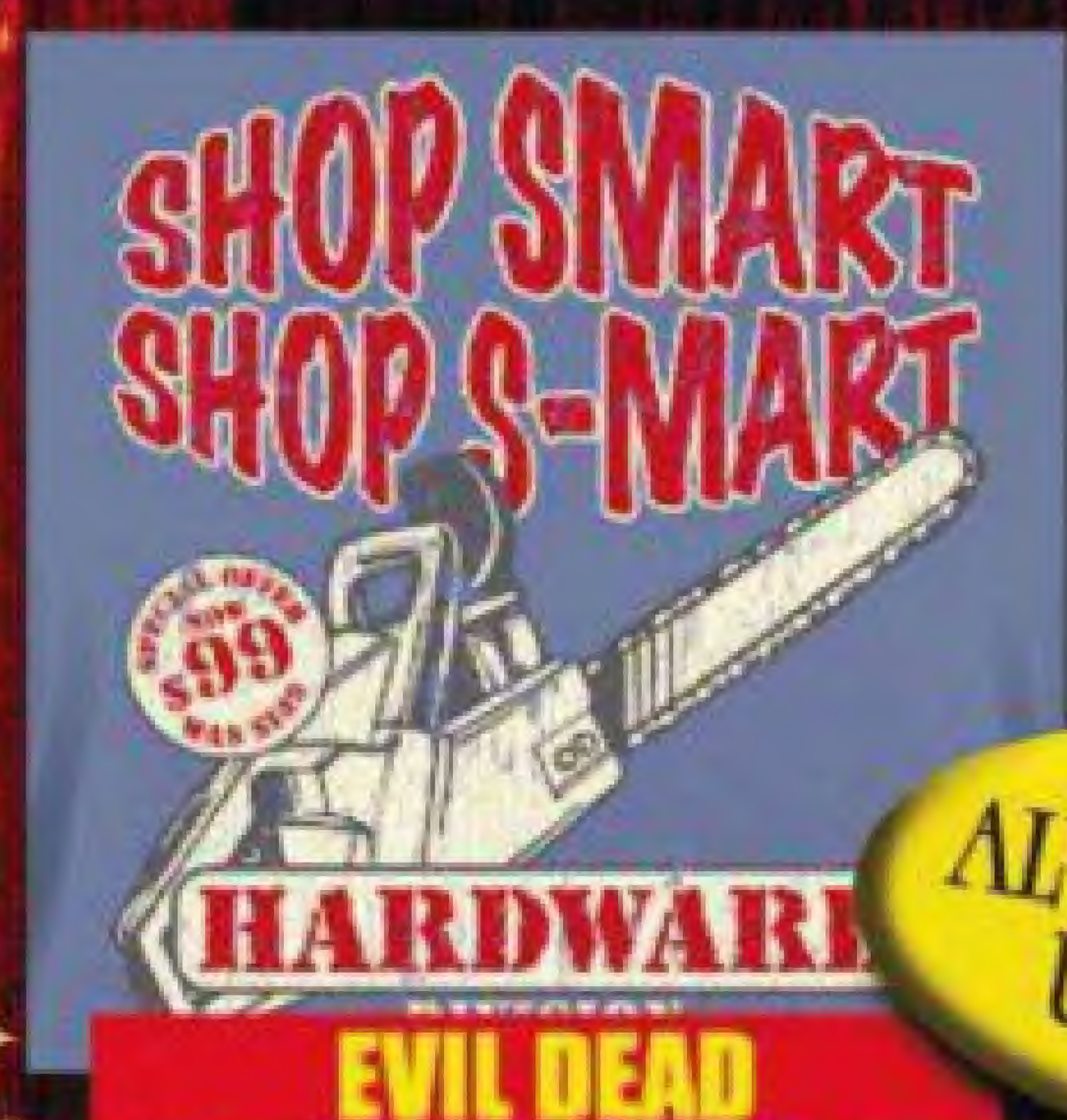
ZOMBIES

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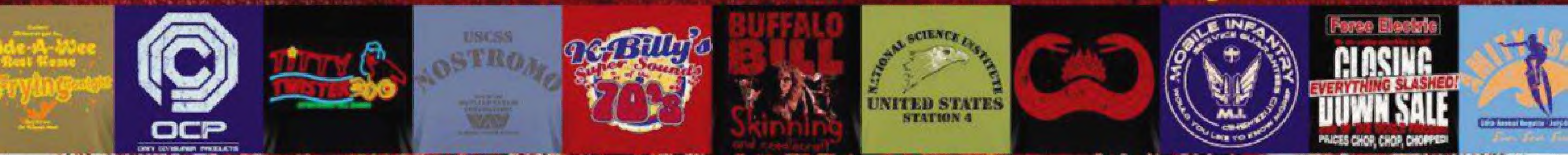
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THE ULTIMATE GUIDE

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GREETINGS!

Y'know, I'd forgotten all about my first
encounter with the living dead until quite
recently. Not long ago, a friend's son was
showing me his collection of roleplaying
gamebooks. As I flicked through Steve
Jackson's *Fighting Fantasy* (1984), experiencing the
warm glow of nostalgia, I suddenly came across an
illustration of a hideous figure – teeth missing, face
ridged, eyes practically popping out of their sockets.
A zombie! Suddenly I remembered obsessively copying
that image, drawing it over and over again, fascinated
by it – trying to master every small detail.

It's a fascination that continues to this day. You
might even argue that it's helped me to find love! Seven
years ago, when I met my future wife, guess what our
second date was? Going to see the remake of *Dawn Of
The Dead*! You might consider that a pretty leftfield
choice, but given that both of us count the original
Dawn among our favourite films, it was pretty
much a no-brainer (no pun intended).

In short: I love zombies, always have. So I've
tried my best to produce a magazine that does them
proud. We've interviewed some of the titans of the
genre, like George Romero and Tom Savini. We've also
spoken to relative newcomers to the field, such as John
W Campbell Award winner Seanan McGuire. There's
plenty about the Romero movies, of course, but I've also
tried to shine a light on lesser-known delights, from
intelligent indies like *American Zombie* to bat's-arse
fare such as *Black Magic 2*. So whether you're a zombie
know-all or a neophyte, I hope that you'll find some new
avenues to explore. Drop me a line at ian.berriman@futurenet.com
and let me know if you do.

Ian Berriman
Editor

THE BRAINS TRUST Meet some of our contributors

JORDAN FARLEY



Jordan is *SFX's* resident word monkey. When not reviewing for Ian he can usually be found in front of the TV with a joypad in his hand. He tweets @JordanFarley and, if the zombie apocalypse strikes, plans to fly to America and hide behind Chuck Norris.

JAMIE GRAHAM



Jamie is *Total Film's* Deputy Editor, and has written for *The Telegraph*, *The Sunday Times*, and reference book *This Is Cinema* (out now). He dreams of living in a mall and taking potshots at zombies – realising this misses the point somewhat.

JON HAMBLIN



Jon has been dead since 2007. Since then he's forged a career as a zombieified writer and game designer. Last year he released iPhone game *Say What You See* (www.swysapp.com). It's now topped a million downloads: good going for a rotting corpse.

JOSEPH MCCABE



Joe is *SFX's* West Coast Editor, the Associate Editor of *FEARnet.com*, and the Bram Stoker Award-nominated author of *Hanging Out With The Dream King: Conversations With Neil Gaiman And His Collaborators*. He's on twitter @JMaCable.

CALUM WADDELL



Calum has been doing the genre-journalist thing for years. His books include *Taboo Breakers* and *Jack Hill: The Exploitation And Blaxploitation Master*. A lover of *Dawn Of The Dead*, he hopes that age has not softened Romero's Marxist credentials...

MATT TALBOT



Matt (designer of our zombie propaganda poster) is an illustrator and designer – find him at www.mattrobot.com. Sadly, hours spent drawing zombies have left him frail – in an actual attack, Matt would be among the first to succumb.

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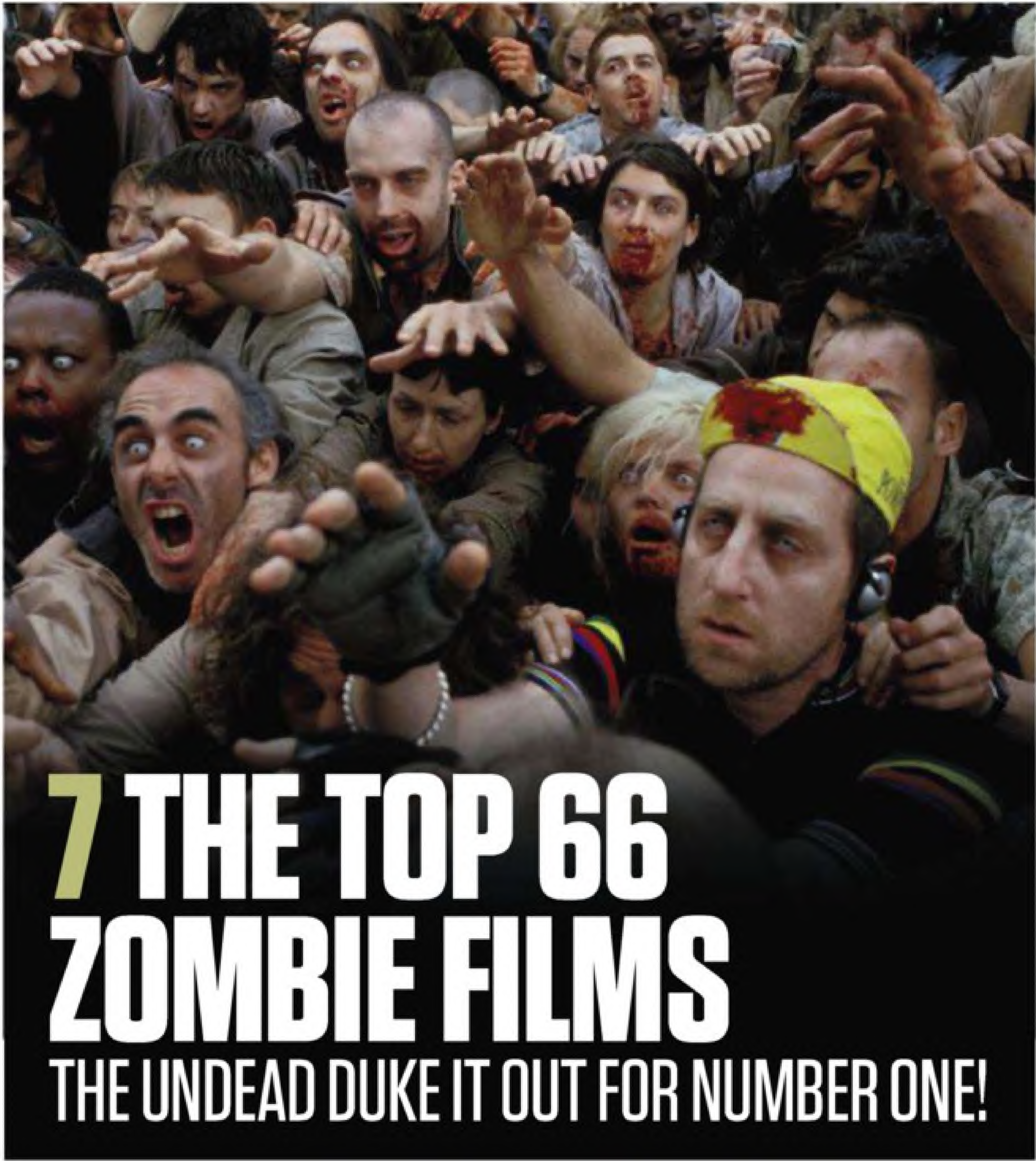
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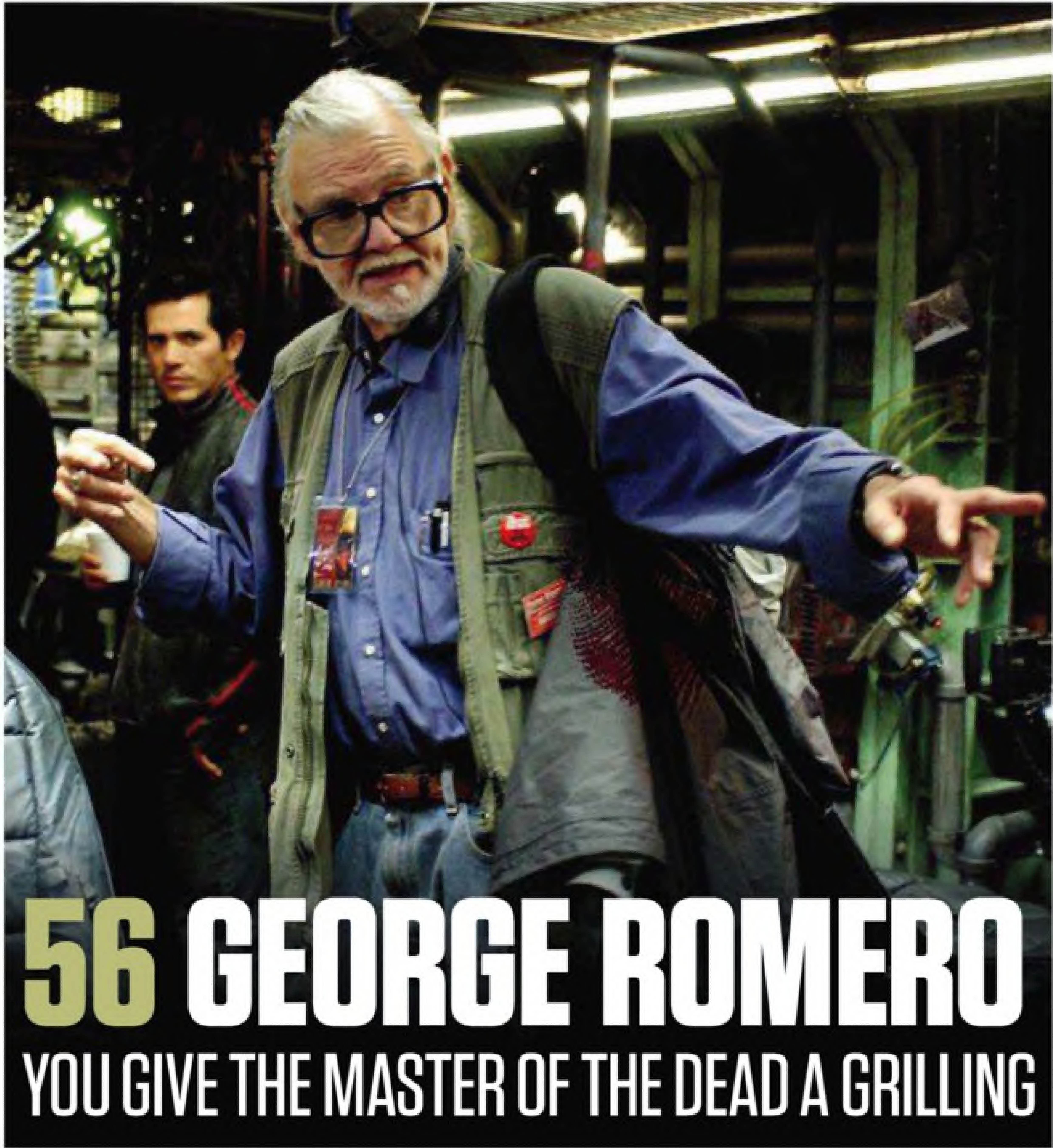
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* Not actually true. Probably.



7 THE TOP 66 ZOMBIE FILMS
THE UNDEAD DUKE IT OUT FOR NUMBER ONE!



56 GEORGE ROMERO
YOU GIVE THE MASTER OF THE DEAD A GRILLING

A FORD BROTHERS FILM

THE DEAD

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MOVIE OF THE YEAR"**

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THE TOP

63

ZOMBIE
FILMS
OF ALL TIME


THE TOP 66 ZOMBIE FILMS OF ALL TIME

Hello, and welcome to our run-down of the best zombie films, in ascending order from 66 to 1. Why not a top 50? Well, because there are more than 50 zombie films worth watching – and 66 is only one numeral away from the Number Of The Beast! There are hundreds more zombie films out there of course, but we guarantee that every one of these has something about it that makes viewing a worthwhile use of your time.

What exactly constitutes a “zombie movie”? Every horror fan has their own prejudices on this front, and we’re no different. Frankenstein’s monster was created by stitching together dead body parts and reanimating them, so does that mean every *Frankenstein* movie is a zombie movie? Erm no, that’d be plain daft.

Another burning question of modern times is this: does *28 Days Later* count as a zombie movie, even though Danny Boyle’s “Infected” are fast-moving blighters and are (more importantly) *not actually dead*? We’ve plumped for yes, though we know that’ll be controversial with some. The simple fact is, *28 Days* feels like a zombie movie. Its Stateside success was also largely

responsible for a revival of the genre; it’s an important milestone in the history of zombie movies, so it would be churlish to leave it out.

Of course, once we allowed one Infected movie in, that opened the door for other recent brethren such as *[REC]* and *Mutants*, as well as earlier efforts like *Nightmare City*. And for one reason or another, we’ve also had no option but to exclude some great films that others *would* consider to be zombie movies. See below for those that didn’t quite meet our exacting standards. 

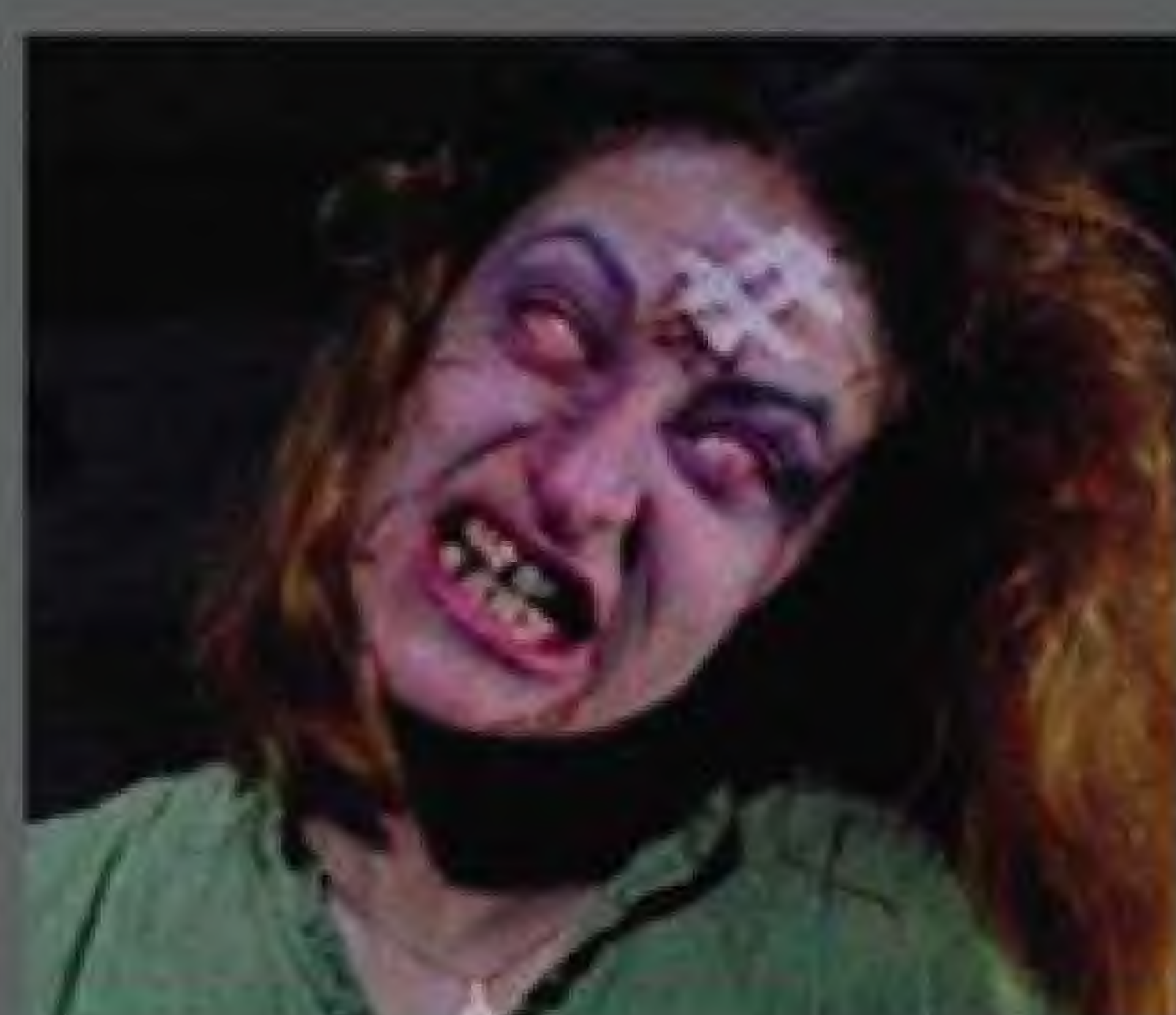
All reviews by Ian Berriman, unless otherwise credited. Some were previously published in SFX, but have been reworked.

CLOSE, BUT NO CIGAR

Are these proper zombie movies? We think not!

THE EVIL DEAD

Possibly a controversial decision this, but although some books consider Sam Raimi’s log cabin-splattering, time-travelling horror trilogy to be zombie movies, we don’t. Deadites aren’t zombies, damn it! They’re people (sometimes dead, but often living) who’ve been possessed by evil spirits – not the same thing at all! And sometimes it’s reversible. So they’re out of the running.



SLITHER

A difficult call, this one. When we spoke to author Seanan McGuire for this issue (see page 102), she named James Gunn’s 2006 horror flick as one of her favourite zombie films, but we always thought of it an alien-possession movie (even though 1986’s *Night Of The Creeps*, which it has an awful lot in common with, definitely is a zombie flick). Whichever way you slice it, it’s a whole lot of gross, goofy fun.



HAPPINESS OF THE KATAKURIS

This typically deranged effort from Japanese director Takashi Miike includes a scene where zombies take part in a musical dance number. Sadly, they don’t get much screen time, though. For similar reasons we also excluded films like *Night Of The Comet* (1984) – brilliant though it is, you might come away disappointed if you bought it expecting a zombie film.



CARNIVAL OF SOULS

One suspects that Herk Harvey’s low-budget 1962 indie classic, in which a young woman survives a car accident, and is then stalked by sinister figures, may well have been an influence on George Romero – but its pale-faced ghouls are not really zombies (to say more would spoil the film for those who haven’t seen it). If they were, it would definitely have made our top 10.



66

JUNK

2000 🇯🇵 Director: Atsushi Muroga



Leonardo DiCaprio almost unwittingly torpedoed this Japanese effort – it was meant to be set in Thailand, but on arrival in Bangkok the filmmakers discovered *The Beach* had monopolised the local crews and were using the equipment they'd planned to hire. Cue relocation and a change of scenario.

After robbing a jeweller's, four criminals rendezvous with the Yakuza they're selling the haul on to at an abandoned military base (for which, read "disused factory"). Unbeknownst to them, the US army have been using the building for experiments into resurrecting the dead, with predictably messy results. Carnage ensues...

Disappointingly, *Junk* isn't set on a Chinese sailboat, so presumably the title is a self-mocking admission that this ain't high art. You have to at least give director Atsushi Muroga credit for self-awareness. This is the sort of film where the words "ENTER PASSCODE" flash in giant letters on computer screens, and the Mysterious Noise turns out to be Just A Stray Cat. At times, it's also something of a head-scratcher: why, when their remote destruct fails, do the army send just two guys to manually blow the place up? Why does the gang's 100 million yen haul look more like £20 of fake pearls from Claire's Accessories? And though there's plenty of gunplay, it could be a mite more dynamic: firing two guns simultaneously while you *run forward in a straight line* is a little vanilla. At least give us a forward roll or something.

Stick with it, though, because *Junk*'s last 15 minutes crank things up a couple of notches. They see the lead zombie (a female one who spends much of the duration wandering around starkers because... er, we'll get back to you on that) show off her talents, which include a super-leap, the bewildering ability to suddenly sprout a platinum-blond hen-night wig, and the stamina to keep on going even after you've been chopped in half with a spade. Truly *Junk*, then, but of the irresistibly moreish kind.

65

MUTANTS

2009 🇫🇷 Director: David Morlet



Time was, the French didn't really do horror films. That's all changed over the last decade, with the likes of *Haute Tension*, *Frontier(s)* and the mind-scarring *Martyrs* flying a *tricolore* drenched in the red stuff.

This particular slice of Gallic gore is basically *Vingt-Huit Jours Plus Tard Encore*. A viral outbreak has decimated the population, turning people into pointy-toothed, fast-moving killers. The one beacon of hope is a military base known as NOAH. Make your way there (two-by-two or not) and maybe you can survive...

The opening moments, which present us with a possible protagonist only to suddenly bump them off, set a pattern: every time a new character is introduced, the egg timer starts ticking to their demise. This adds a sense of danger and unpredictability, but does rather leave you with no-one to root for, other than plucky everywoman Sonia, a woman whose partner, Marco, has been bitten – and who also happens to be the father of her unborn child. Will she be able to do what's necessary and kill him when the decisive moment comes?

The first act is adrenalinised and intriguing. It cheekily plays on the zombie cognoscenti's expectations, too, replicating the airfield scene from Romero's *Dawn Of The Dead*, then giving it a twist. The winter setting allows for some attractive snowy vistas of the Picardy region.

Performances are strong – though since no-one gets a noteworthy line of dialogue, that's simply a matter of conveying fear or rage. And, much like its compatriots, *Mutants* has an unblinking gaze. Watching someone succumb to the infection is a grim, protracted business – alopecia, pissing blood and all – like observing someone in the last throes of terminal disease.

Sadly, once our heroine has hunkered down in a hospital to wait for help to arrive, it becomes clear that director David Morlet isn't going to add much to the template set in place by Danny Boyle.

64

ZEDER

1983 🇮🇹 Director: Pupi Avati



Getting an eyeful of the Emperor's ding-a-ling is always a depressing experience, especially when you're absolutely convinced you're going to see some beautifully tailored robes. *Zeder* has a very good rep amongst connoisseurs of intelligent horror – unsurprisingly, since director Pupi Avati's 1976 horror-mystery *The House With Laughing Windows* is widely admired – but is something of a disappointment.

Our hero is Stefano, a novelist who discovers a strange essay written on the ribbon of an old typewriter. It discusses "K-zones", places that exist in a "zero time", where the dead can return to life. The fascinated writer's investigations eventually lead him to the grounds of a derelict holiday camp (now *there's* true horror for you: zombies at Butlins), the site of another K-zone, where an ex-priest has had himself buried.

If you're expecting zombie carnage, you'll be disappointed: only two people are seen coming back to life. *Zeder*'s more the sort of film where people sit in antique chairs spouting indigestible dialogue like, "A demise isn't a treatable malady; it's a pure end, an absolute state reached by a total event, which is final and for good." Well, quite.

The elegantly cheekboned Gabriele Lavia makes a charismatic lead, there are some winningly eccentric supporting characters, and the scenes of the former priest's eventual revival are fleetingly creepy. But when your story takes the form of a lengthy investigation. Then the climax really needs to deliver. The main problem here is that we know from quite early in the film exactly what "K-zones" are, so when the finale arrives, all it inspires is a shrug of indifference.

A warning: should you try to track *Zeder* down on DVD, be careful not to purchase the US edit (released under the title *Revenge Of The Dead*), which is missing whacking great chunks of the film.

63

BIO ZOMBIE

1998 🇭🇰 Director: Wilson Yip



Watching this spoofy Hong Kong effort may put you off Lucozade for life: bizarrely, its zombie outbreak kicks off via a sample of an Iraqi bioweapon stored in a bottle of the sugary energy drink. Whatever next? Zombie Bovril?

It's best summarised as *Mallrats* with zombies. Buddies Woody (Jordan Chan) and Bee (Sam Lee) run a small shop in the mall in question, selling dodgy DVDs. Not that they seem to do much actual business; they're much too busy flogging stolen cellphones or lamely trying to hit on the girls from the beauty parlour.

Like a novelty-tied office joker, *Bio Zombie* is zany with a capital Z. It sets out its stall during the opening credits, which begin as if you're sitting in a cinema, with people's heads obscuring the view and voices muttering, "How long is this?"

Our heroes are a right pair of losers, and quite quickly, as we follow their petty adventures, things become a little tiresome; after 45 minutes you're longing to see zombies arrive *en masse* and do their worst. When they do turn up, the make-ups are pretty dreadful, seemingly combining joke-shop wound kits with a liberal scattering of talc.

Having said all this, *Bio Zombie* does contain quite a few decent gags, many of the visual kind: one sequence, where Woody and Bee are questioned separately by police, appears to be shot in split-screen, until the camera pulls back to reveal that it all took place while they were standing right next to each other! There's also some amusing videogame homage, with words like "RELOAD" flashing up as our heroes take on the undead.

The subtitles on the region one DVD release add further humour, thanks to their mangled take on English. Ever since watching *Bio Zombie*, we've been announcing a trip to the toilet with the words, "I want to stool now"!

62

GRAVEYARD ALIVE

2004  Director: Elza Kephart

Graveyard Alive (subtitle: *A Zombie Nurse In Love*) is the first film in this run-down by a female director, and there are only three more to come. Zombie cinema's 79-year-long history encompasses hundreds upon hundreds of movies, but we've struggled to identify more than ten helmed by women. Let's hope that gender bias is corrected in the very near future.

This low-budget indie was shot in Montreal (mostly in two rooms in an empty hospital) over the course of two and a half weeks in 2000, and took three years to finish, with reshoots taking place in 2002. All the dialogue was dubbed after shooting, which adds an extra layer of artifice to what's already a knowingly camp piece.

The storyline stirs zombies into the mix with an affectionate spoofing of soapy hospital melodrama. Dowdy nurse Patsy Powers is in love with the gorgeous Dr Dox, but in her specs and chunky-knit cardigan she's all but invisible to him. That swiftly changes after Patsy gets bitten by one of her patients. The zombie infection acts as the catalyst for a sexual awakening, transforming her into a purring sex kitten in push-up bra and knee-high leather boots. Unfortunately, it also gives her a ravenous appetite for human flesh...

The film has a rather charming home-crafted feel to it: the signs in the hospital have clearly been hand-drawn, and some of the peeling-skin zombie make-ups look like they're the result of liberal applications of Gloy. Add to that an introduction in the mode of Criswell from *Plan 9 From Outer Space*, chapter intertitles in silent-movie style and some luminous black-and-white photography (which makes beautiful use of shadow), and you have a film that's most likely to appeal to fans of another Canuck: cult director Guy Maddin.



61

DANCE OF THE DEAD

2008  Director: Gregg Bishop

If *Zombieland* were Disneyworld, this indie horror-comedy shot in Georgia (the US state, that is, not the former Soviet republic) would be Alton Towers: a less high-profile, less expensive attraction, but one still well worth a visit.

Director Gregg Bishop first read Joe Ballarini's script way back in 1998, when the two were in film school together, but it was another decade before he managed to get the project off the ground. The pitch: John Hughes meets George Romero. On the eve of the prom, goo from a power station revives the dead at the nearby cemetery, who march on the local high school. A ragtag bunch of heroes must save the day. The stereotypes are instantly familiar – the geeks; the rockers (one of whom is played by *X-Men: First Class*'s Havok, Lucas Till); the hard case – but all possess sufficient personality to enable you warm to them, particularly the joker in the pack, pizza delivery boy Jimmy, a kind of 10-years-younger version of Simon Pegg's Shaun.

The film's low budget is glaringly obvious: the prom is under-populated, and the zombie apocalypse amounts to little more than a flipped-over car. You'll be far too busy chuckling to grouse about this, though, thanks to Looney Tunes gore, some neat reversals (our heroes barricade themselves in a house, then discover it's a funeral home...), and batty dialogue ("I don't know how to shoot a machete!"). There are also some novel spins on the undead: the movie's zombies launch out of their graves as if they've been fired out of a cannon (what *would* George think?), and a couple of teens who were smooching when they were alive start to *eat each other's faces* after death.

Likeably goofy, *Dance Of The Dead* probably isn't a night you'll remember for the rest of your life, but while it lasts it's a blast.



From *Live And Let Die* to die and let live for Baron Samedi.

60

SUGAR HILL

1974  Director: Paul Maslansky

"If Sam Arkoff went out and had his cleaning lady write a movie, it couldn't have been any worse than this piece of junk they dropped on me. Everything was judged by Mrs Arkoff, who sat at home and ate chocolates and read paperbacks all her life." The acerbic (and faintly misogynistic) assessment of the late actor Robert Quarry there, on *Sugar Hill* producer Samuel Z Arkoff. Pay him no mind. The blaxploitation horror subgenre had a brief flowering in the mid-'70s, after the box office success of *Blacula* – and this zombie flick (shot in Houston, Texas) is one of the better examples.

The storyline may have a familiar ring to it for connoisseurs of cult movies, echoing as it does Pam Grier-starring revenge movies such as *Coffy* and *Foxy Brown*. Marki Bey plays Diane "Sugar" Hill, who swears vengeance on mob boss Morgan (Quarry) and his goons after her boyfriend gets beaten to death for refusing to sell his nightclub. Turning to an elderly voodoo priestess for help, Sugar soon has otherworldly aid in the

form of top-hatted master of the dead Baron Samedi (yes, him from *Live And Let Die*), and the zombies acting under his control.

The majority of the running time is given over to showing Morgan's lackeys getting their just desserts via a variety of gruesome methods. One is thrown to ravenous pigs; another's chucked in a coffin full of snakes; a third receives some very unwanted extras at the local massage parlour, when the undead give him anything but a happy ending. But our favourite sequence sees one man attacked by a solitary chicken's foot, which hops up his leg and grabs him by the throat (or rather, the actor *holds* it to his throat...).

Admittedly, there isn't a lot more to the film than that. Sure, we see our afroed heroine using her feminine wiles to draw her nemesis to his doom, and Sugar's cop ex swotting up on voodoo as he investigates, but all that's just padding to fill the gaps between the killings, all of which are too absurd to alarm. The zombies look utterly ridiculous, mysteriously coated as they are in spray-on cobweb, with silver-painted ping-pong balls for eyes. No matter: as the gold-toothed, boggle-eyed Baron Samedi, Don Pedro Colley is memorably deranged; and repetitive though it may be, there's a great deal of satisfaction to be had in seeing the corpses of slaves sticking it to The Man, time and time again. Right on, brothers – we can dig it.



The zombies of *Sugar Hill* were in dire need of a feather duster...

59

OUTPOST

2008  Director: Steve Barker

"Zombies", as Alan Partridge succinctly put it, "by their very nature are inconsistent." That's doubly true of the creatures in this low-budget British horror, which can't seem to make their minds up if they're zombies or ghosts.

Rome's Ray Stevenson heads a small squad of mercenaries paid to escort a businessman to a bunker in an Eastern European war-zone (actually Scotland). Inside, they discover the results of Nazi experiments to harness the holy grail of physics, a unified field theory, to create unkillable super-soldiers. Well, it makes a change from dabbling with the occult, eh?

Put it down to morphic fields or great minds thinking alike, but *Outpost* was one of two Nazi-zombie flicks to emerge in the space of months (see also 48, *Dead Snow*). Fortunately, the sight of lumbering, rotten-faced stormtroopers never gets stale. Nor does wince-inducing ocular trauma, a video nasty staple that pops up more than once here. The mercenaries are characterised enough for you to take an interest in their fate – particularly a god-fearing Scot and his tormentor, a laconic hillbilly – and their military jargon has the ring of veracity.

Unfortunately, this is one of those films that's a very slow build to an anti-climax, and it doesn't make a whole lot of sense. Of course, logic is defenestrated as soon as you're dealing with the subject of Nazi zombies, but these ghouls can appear and disappear at will, substantial one moment and intangible the next. The script never comes up with a decent explanation as to why they fanny about for hours instead of slaughtering the squad straight away, and the mercenaries' continuing use of standard military procedures to combat them also looks a little ludicrous.

Still, faint praise is due: as Nazi zombie films go, *Outpost* is far superior to the likes of *Zombie Lake*. A follow-up starring *Coupling*'s Richard Coyle is currently in post-production, and sounds like a much more ambitious effort.

58

BRIDE OF RE-ANIMATOR

1990  Director: Brian Yuzna

Though set a mere eight months after the first film's demented Miskatonic massacre, it took five years for Brian Yuzna's *Re-Animator* sequel to bring fresh terror to the big screen. Taking its cues from episodes V and VI of HP Lovecraft's "Herbert West: Re-Animator" and James Whale's classic 1935 horror *The Bride Of Frankenstein*, *Bride Of Re-Animator* is every bit the assault on good taste its esteemed predecessor was.

It begins with an opening gambit in the trenches of the Peruvian Civil War, where we find single-minded latter-day Prometheus Dr Herbert West (Jeffrey Combs) and his tormented partner Dr Dan Cain (Bruce Abbott) continuing their research into re-animating dead humans. Not just whole humans though, because West's latest breakthrough allows him to summon any limb or single piece of human tissue to startling life – which is fortunate because all Dan has left of his murdered girlfriend is her heart. And body parts are in ample supply when you set up shop next to a cemetery...

Building on *Re-Animator*'s outrageous creations, the team at KNB EFX out-weirded themselves with *Bride*, creating perverse dogs with human arms, unruly finger monsters and the titular patchwork princess. This is all foreplay, however, for the monumentally madcap finale, where West's "headstrong" nemesis Dr Hill returns to wreak his revenge with a legion of re-animated freaks.

Bride may repeat many of the first film's tricks – particularly the pathos that's milked from Dan's calamitously doomed love life – but the film capitalises on the popularity of West by expanding his role, with Combs better than ever as the frosty boffin. It's not the most accomplished zombie movie on this list, but *Bride*'s grotesque humour and truly stomach-churning body horror is deliriously entertaining – a marriage made in heaven. **Jordan Farley**



A massive gun and a hall of glass – what could go wrong?

57

RESIDENT EVIL

2002  Director: Paul WS Anderson

On games consoles, the *Resident Evil* series has enjoyed unparalleled critical and commercial success for a survival horror franchise since its debut over 15 years ago. On the big screen, British writer/director Paul WS Anderson has replicated the "commercial success" bit, but at the cost of his name, which has become a punchbag for critics and trolls. The reason? Let's be honest, most of the movies are pants. But what many forget is that the first *Resident Evil* is a superior example of the modern action-horror. It's noisy, it's stupid, it's not even particularly faithful to the games, but boy is it fun.

Deep under the streets of Raccoon City, a viral outbreak in the Hive (the vile Umbrella Corporation's genetic research facility) has turned its staff into an army of rabid undead. Knowledge of this might have been useful to amnesiac Alice (Milla Jovovich) and the commando group who seize her before heading below ground to investigate and disable the facility's rogue AI, Red Queen. They succeed, but release the zombie hordes

in the process. Their only hope for survival is their mysterious tag-along. Luckily for them, there's more to Alice than a body-hugging red dress.

Released just months before Danny Boyle's pioneering *28 Days Later*, *Resident Evil* is one of the last hurrahs for traditional slow, shambling dead heads. The make-up, effects work and performances of the human cast are among the best committed to the screen. Even the non-humans excel: the zombie dogs are truly terrifying, looking like their skins have turned inside out as they try to eat yours.

Unlike Anderson's previous videogame adaptation, *Mortal Kombat*, nods to the game are in short supply and generally underwhelming. None of the main characters come from the games. The most memorable scene has nothing to do with the game either (or even the undead), as four squaddies get sliced and diced in the Red Queen's deadly laser security room.

Slick cinematography, editing and camerawork give the film a pleasing big-budget aesthetic, bolstered by a great score – a collaboration between composer Marco Beltrami and goth-rocker Marilyn Manson. Its trump card, however, is Alice – one of the great kick-ass heroines of the past decade – which might explain the franchise's popularity, despite the questionable quality of the sequels. *Resident Evil* isn't high art, but sometimes seeing a piece of decaying flesh get shot in the face will do fine. **Jordan Farley**



Attempting to seduce the zombies is not the way forward, Alice!

56

PET SEMATARY

1989  Director: Mary Lambert

Stephen King movies can be a bit hit and miss. Some turn out well, like *The Shining*, others... not so well (yes, we're looking at you, *The Mangler*). This adaptation of King's 1983 novel (at one time lined up as a George Romero project) falls somewhere in the middle.

It's one of those horrors where the characters' stupidity rapidly exhausts your reserves of patience. Dale Midkiff plays Louis Creed, whose family move into a new home by a busy highway. When his daughter's kitty gets mown down by a truck, neighbour Jed (Fred Gwynne, a man who's surely heard more than his fair share of "Why the long face?" gags) takes him to the Indian burial ground (isn't it always?) behind the nearby pet cemetery (the local kids can't spell, y'see). One interment later and the cat is magically resurrected – but returns with an evil temperament...

From here on in, it's blindingly obvious how events will play out – Creed's young son Gage practically has "doomed" stencilled on his forehead. Director Mary Lambert (who, among other credits, also directed videos for Madonna tracks such as "Material Girl" and "Like A Virgin") undeniably has flair, but there's a surfeit of dry-ice mist and cat-leaps-out scares, and the performances she coaxes from her cast are hilariously overwrought – when a toddler's death inspires guffaws, something's seriously wrong. Louis's persistent dunderheadedness is maddening, and a subplot about his wife's guilt over the death of her sister from spinal meningitis toys with the idea of disability as monstrosity, leaving a bad taste in the mouth.

However, as soon as little Gage meets his inevitable fate, the movie shifts up a couple of gears. Merrily slashing people in the Achilles heel with a scalpel, giggling like a wind-up toy clown, the reanimated rugrat makes Damien Thorn look positively cuddlesome. Once watched, the words "I brought you something, mommy!" will forever hold a sinister charge.



55

SHOCK WAVES

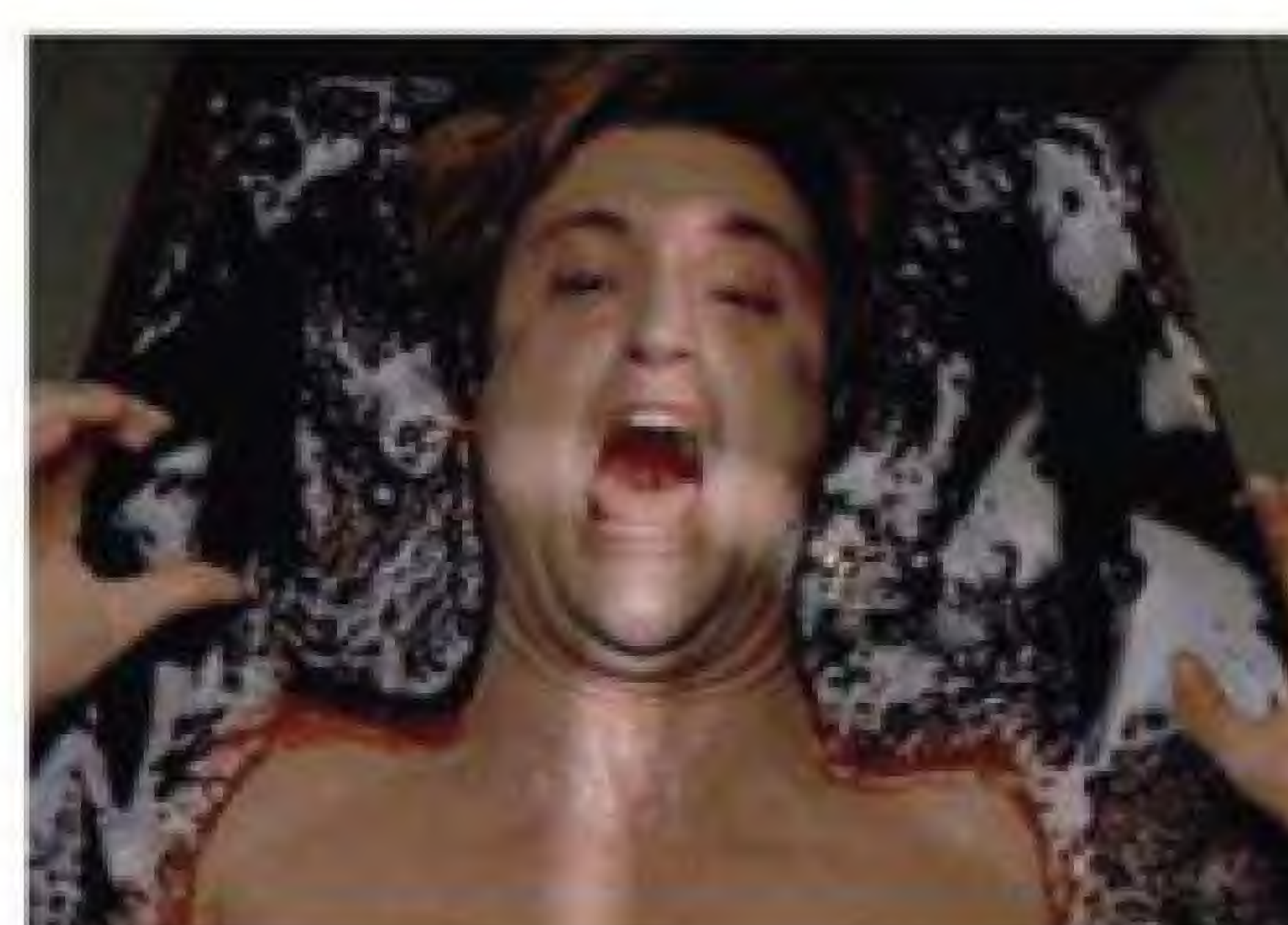
1977  Director: Ken Wiederhorn

Shock Waves didn't come up with the idea of combining the undead and the Third Reich (see 1943's *Revenge Of The Zombies* and 1966's *The Frozen Dead* for proof), but it did inspire a minor wave, with Eurotrash directors Jesus "Jess" Franco and Jean Rollin getting in on the Nazi-zombies act (with *Oasis Of The Zombies* and *Zombie Lake* respectively).

The main thing that *Shock Waves* has going for it is the presence of Peter Cushing as an aged former SS officer. Cushing never turned in a performance that wasn't worth watching, and that truism holds good here, even though his role basically consists of delivering the exposition and barking out Germanic clichés such as "*Kommen sie hier!*" He's the only inhabitant of a small island on which a group of tourists have been shipwrecked – well, apart from a unit of indestructible stormtroopers named *Der Toten Korps*.

These begoggled figures provide many eerie moments as they rise up from the waves (or rather, straighten up from where – like *Doctor Who's* Sea Devils – they've been lurking with heads bowed). They also do a lot of lying about in rock pools and ponds, which makes for some startling surprises, but doesn't seem like the most effective military strategy in the world. Their other strength is omnipresence: no matter which direction our heroes run in, the undead supersoldiers somehow always get there first to lurk beneath the surface in wait...

Sadly, at times when Cushing's off the screen and the zombies aren't rising from the depths or standing silhouetted against the horizon, *Shock Waves* is a bit of a drag. It has plenty of atmosphere – to which the score, with its mournful siren wails, bringing to mind whale song and fog-horn blasts, makes a considerable contribution – but doesn't have any notion of what to do with its single great idea, beyond a deadly game of hide and seek.



54

THE SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW

1988  Director: Wes Craven

After two decades of Romero-style zombies, Wes Craven took the genre back to the world of voodoo, from whence it originally sprang. Cleverly, *The Serpent And The Rainbow* takes a have-cake-and-eat-it approach, incorporating living dead elements via dreams and hallucinations.

The film takes its name from anthropologist Wade Davis's 1985 non-fiction book, in which he visited Haiti to investigate how malevolent voodoo practitioners went about "zombifying" their victims. Davis concluded they used powders including tetrodotoxin, a paralyzing biotoxin found in pufferfish as well as certain toads, to cause the appearance of death. After the victims woke in their coffins, beatings and doses of *Datura stramonium* (a hallucinogenic plant commonly known in the States as Jimson weed) were used to convince them they'd had their souls stolen.

Bill Pullman plays Harvard anthropologist Dennis Alan, who travels to Haiti to investigate the "zombie powder" in the hope that it can form the basis of a revolutionary new anaesthetic. Unfortunately, this soon puts him on a collision course with the government's ruthless paramilitary force, the Tonton

Macoutes. Refusing to be deflected, Alan is subjected to nail-through-scrotum torture, framed for murder, and ultimately buried alive.

Filming began in Haiti, nine months after a revolution overthrew corrupt former-president Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier. Craven went to the most powerful voodoo priest on the island seeking help and protection – in return he had to visit a Beverley Hills jeweller to buy gold chains for use in ceremonies! He got off lightly compared to writer Richard Maxwell, though. While interviewing one expert on zombification, Maxwell was spiked with something and ended up having to be flown home after descending into crazed paranoia.

Filming later switched to the Dominican Republic, so judging what was shot where is hard. Regardless, the travelogue aspects are fascinating. We're taken into bustling streets crowded with extras, and witness cockfights, voodoo ceremonies and glass-eating performances. As you might expect from the man who brought us *Nightmare On Elm Street*, the dream sequences are particularly potent – in one, a snake leaps out of the mouth of a desiccated zombie sorceress; in another, Alan is trapped in a coffin rapidly filling with blood.

The way Craven weaves real-life events (and genuine news footage) into a sensationalist B-movie may leave you feeling uncomfortable, though. Isn't stirring the Tonton Macoutes into a fantastical tale such as this, featuring a sorcerer who stores human souls in jars (complete with cheesy special effects) and can enter people's dreams (remind you of anyone?), in questionable taste? Still, that never stopped anyone using the Nazis as fantasy-film bogeymen, did it?

53

THEY CAME BACK

2004 ■ Director: Robin Campillo

Trust the French to take a more thoughtful approach to zombies. This arthouse effort (released *en Francais* as *Les Revenants*) is completely free from exploding heads and brains-based feasting. Instead, it makes metaphorical use of the living dead, in order to look at how we deal with grief.

One day, millions of people who died within the last ten years suddenly come back. A small town acts as a microcosm, as its people struggle with the logistical problems and emotional issues presented by their 13,000 “returnees”. They come back not in the form of rotting corpses smeared in graveyard dirt, but smartly dressed and impeccably coiffured – strolling, not shambling – like they’ve just stepped out of Gap. In an interview with filmmaker Baris Azman (tinyurl.com/barisazman), debutant director Robin Campillo



explained, “We wanted the dead people just to be like photographs of themselves – the memory of them actually coming back.”

Campillo says that he was trying to recreate the sensations he experienced when two friends died within the space of a month. For a while, he felt that they were still present; after a time, he was able to let them go. Clinging onto deceased loved ones, it’s implied here, is destructive. The dead can discuss the past, but not the future; the living must look forward in order to be truly alive. The film symbolises this neatly

in a closing image, as a woman wipes condensation from her mirror; finally emerging from the fog of grief, she can see herself again.

But there are other facets to the way in which the returned dead are portrayed in *They Came Back*. They’re treated, much like refugees or illegal immigrants, as second-class citizens (the *socially* dead); and since 65% are over 40 and all of them display “a lack of synchronism with reality” (as if in a perpetual state of having walked into the kitchen and forgotten what they went in for...), the film also toys with the



contemporary issue of Western society’s ageing population.

A mystery slowly builds as it’s discovered that the dead are congregating at night for reasons unknown, but *They Came Back* is not overly concerned with narrative thrust. Poised and quietly eerie, it takes a cool, non-sensational approach; even when parents are being reunited with a dead child, or a woman is steeling herself to kiss her dead lover, Campillo resists letting the film slip into melodrama. You may find that restraint frustrating – or consider it a refreshing change.

52

THE WALKING DEAD

1936 ■ Director: Michael Curtiz

If you reckoned Bub, the partially domesticated zombie from *Day Of The Dead* (see 11) was the most sympathetic zombie character ever, or even the titular shambler of *Fido* (see 33), then think again; he’s eclipsed by *The Walking Dead*’s John Ellman (or if you prefer, John *Elman* – we see the name spelt both ways on screen at different times!). It’s also the only film we can think of that sees an undead pianist tinkling the ivories.

This unusual effort from the director who later went on to helm the likes of *Casablanca* and *The Adventures Of Robin Hood* is part *Frankenstein*, part crime drama. Framed for the murder of a judge, former con Ellman (Boris Karloff) is executed, despite the existence of a pair of eyewitnesses who could easily clear his name, but are too frightened of reprisals to step forward and provide their evidence. Fortunately,



they both happen to work for a doctor who’s just mastered the secret of reanimating the dead using a mechanical heart...

Once revived, Ellman returns from the other side with impossible knowledge of exactly what has happened to him, becoming “the instrument of some supernatural power” as he confronts those responsible for sending him to the electric chair.

As you’ve probably ascertained by now, the plot is incredibly contrived in every detail. The best approach is simply not to

think about it – otherwise you might wonder why, for example, Ellman never bothers to mention the fact that a man *paid* him to keep watch on the judge’s house in his defence.

Boris Karloff is excellent in the central role. He imbues the noble, pathetic Ellman (who wanders the cemetery at night, explaining “I belong here”) with considerable pathos, yet at the same time his baleful glare sends a shiver down your spine; only Bela Lugosi’s *Murder Legendre* (see 40) might defeat him in a world championship stare-off.



Interestingly, Ellman never actually *kills* anyone – his sinister presence simply causes people to, say, trip over and shoot themselves, or have a heart attack and fall out of a window. It’s like watching some bizarre splice of *Final Destination* and *You’ve Been Framed!*

In the initial draft, the plan was for Ellman was to return from the beyond as a savage, bestial killer, but Karloff lobbied successfully to make him a sympathetic character throughout. He was quite right to do so; the results are far more unusual and memorable.



Jumper-wearing undead loverman Hugh, in *Neither The Sea Nor The Sand*.

51

NEITHER THE SEA NOR THE SAND

1972 Director: Fred Burnley

Gore fans, be warned: this '70s oddity may have you choking back the sick, but probably not in the way you were hoping for. Produced by Tigon, the British horror specialists behind the likes of *Witchfinder General* and *Blood On Satan's Claw*, it's a zombie romance boasting an atmosphere thick with British miserablism.

Susan Hampshire plays Anna, a married woman who falls for Hugh (Michael Petrovitch) during a visit to Jersey. The lovers subsequently take a trip to Scotland, where Hugh suffers a heart attack on the beach. He's pronounced dead on the scene, but returns to their cottage hours later, inexplicably reanimated by the power of Susan's love...

It's the dialogue that makes the film so initially unpalatable. Hugh, a Land Rover-driving, sturdy jumper-wearing take on your typical Mills & Boon brooding male, has a penchant for pretentious pronouncements such as "Everything is real - reality is total".

In the early stages, it often feels like a French and Saunders parody of a French film. Exchanges such as "Been waiting long?" "A lifetime!" may have you hurling shoes at the screen.

Rosemary Davies, credited for "additional dialogue", could well be the individual to pin the blame on in this regard. The film was based on a novel by Gordon Honeycombe, who worked as a newsreader for ITN in the '60s and '70s (and later for TV-am). He was singularly unimpressed by the changes to his screenplay, to the point where he was banned from the set in order to prevent him voicing his disgruntlement to the cast.

Despite its failings, the film has something about it. For the most part, the post-mortem Hugh (incapable of speech, but able to communicate with Anna via a telepathic bond) doesn't look all that different - most of us look rougher after a night at the pub - but once he acquires jet-black eyes, he cuts a chilling figure. Susan's behaviour becomes increasingly disturbing as she scales the heights of denial. And while it does so in a rather buttoned-up way, *Neither The Sea Nor The Sand* does flirt with taboos: in the most memorable sequence, Susan sheds her dressing gown in front of her undead beloved and reclines on the bed in her nightie. The director discreetly draws a veil over proceedings, fading to black and resisting the urge to cut to a train entering a tunnel, but the implication is clear, leaving your mind reeling as you speculate on the practicalities...



Another woman falls prey to that ridiculous knitwear.

50

TOKYO ZOMBIE

2005 Director: Sakichi Sato

If Reeves and Mortimer took on the undead, the results might look a little like this oddball Japanese effort, based on a manga by Yusaku Hanakuma, and written/directed by the man who scripted Takashi Miike's shockingly bloody *Ichi The Killer*. It certainly shares the comedy duo's love of slapstick violence, as we see people walloped with a fire extinguisher, spanked with a spade, or having their head kicked off like a rugby ball! Vic and Bob would also surely approve of the memorably coiffured central pairing of Fujio, a slapheaded Ju-Jitsu obsessive, and Mitsuo, his idiotic, Afroed sidekick. Another good comparison point is afterlife black comedy *Wristcutters*; like that film, *Tokyo Zombie* manages to wring offbeat humour from the bleakest of subject matter.

Tokyo Zombie is nothing if not a film of two halves. In the first, we see the zombie apocalypse kick off - but our heroes don't seem all that cut up about it, and are farcically useless at dealing with the situation. Next, the movie makes an audacious leap forward: five years into the future, in a safe enclave, wealthy housewives stave off boredom by watching zombies and professional wrestlers fight to the death in a gladiatorial arena.

The jazzy score is curiously appropriate for a film that's forever noodling off on strange tangents. Unpredictability is a rare commodity in a genre that's overcrowded with unimaginative knockoffs, and *Tokyo Zombie*'s main strength is that it's full of surprises - not all of them tasteful. It's the sort of film in which an old man's first reaction to discovering the corpse of a schoolgirl is to lift up her skirt for a sneaky peek. Nothing is off-limits here, whether it's child abuse, cancer, or repeated use of the word "retard" (or whatever its Japanese equivalent is). Yet despite, or perhaps because of this, it remains totally charming.



49

LA HORDE

2009 Directors: Yannick Dahan & Benjamin Rocher

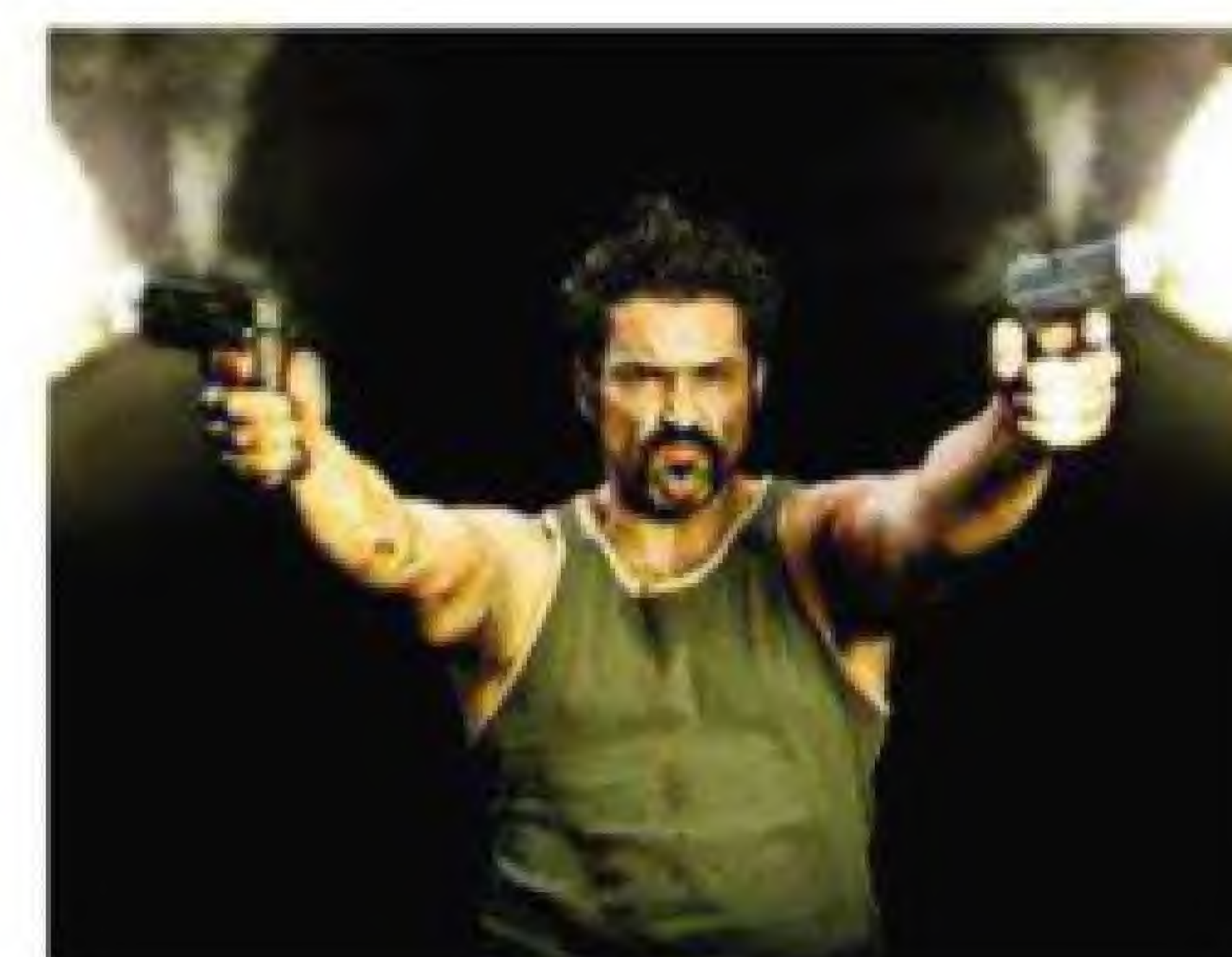
La Horde is one of those films that's so laced with testosterone that it wouldn't be too surprising if, once the lights came up, the audience discovered they'd all grown beards.

It all takes place in and around a decrepit Parisian tower block that's the base of operations for a gang of criminals. A team of cops visit the building, bent on exacting extra-judicial punishment for the death of a colleague. Then the advent of a zombie apocalypse (of the kind so speedy it makes *28 Days Later*'s Infected look like tortoises) forces the two sides to join forces in the struggle for survival.

It's been summarised as "*Die Hard* with zombies", though first-time directors Yannick Dahan and Benjamin Rocher's description - "*Conan in a flat*" - is more intriguing. Dahan and Rocher's aims were to create a film with strong production values and "tough, badass" characters, one which reflected their love of '80s action flicks. They succeeded on all these fronts, but the results are a little one-note, particularly if you have a limited appetite for shouting, machine-gunning and hard-man scowling.

Pregnant cop Aurore, the appointed Final Girl, is a welcome oasis of femininity amid the scowling machismo - although she has *cajones* to match those of her male colleagues. Far less welcome is an offensively unpleasant (and entirely gratuitous) sequence in which a crawling female zombie is greeted with cries of "let's fuck this little slut", before having her breasts uncovered. Yeuch.

Still, as a debut effort it's undoubtedly impressive, and if it's hyperbolic violence you want, *La Horde* delivers it in spades. No surface is left clean of blood splatters as our heroes work their way down to ground level in an orgy of stabbing, battering and shooting. Mind you, you can't help thinking that if they remembered to point their hand-cannons at head height it'd all be over a hell of a lot more quickly...



48

DEAD SNOW

2009  Director: Tommy Wirkola

Norway isn't a nation you readily associate with horror, and with good reason: in the words of Tommy Wirkola, writer/director of *Dead Snow*, "Norwegian cinema has always been kind of boring, really serious films." With this, the country's first zombie flick, Wirkola aimed to change that, by homaging the '80s horrors that he loved growing up.

As a bunch of medical students party in a cabin, we're treated to a string of familiar tropes. There's a "gatekeeper" figure, of course – the grizzled local who fills in the backstory regarding a German squadron from Norway's years of Nazi occupation who disappeared, never to be seen again. Engage in casual sex and you get punished, and "dead" bodies rise up in the back of shot. None of this is necessarily a problem – as every cliché hoves into view, fans of *The Evil Dead* and *Friday The 13th* will greet them like a much-loved old friend.

What makes *Dead Snow* fresh is the setting: its bad-taste blitzkrieg goes off against a stunning backdrop of snow-shrouded Norwegian mountains (where Wirkola himself spent holidays in his youth), and blood just looks more aesthetically pleasing splattered across the white stuff (the crew had endless problems with their syrup freezing up, necessitating more use of digital blood). The film gets better as it progresses, gathering momentum like a snowball rolling downhill. And Wirkola is a master of the whiplash-inducing gear change: just as you're starting to think that taking on zombie stormtroopers with a chainsaw looks like a lark, he snaps you out of your good humour quicker than a slap in the face with a leather glove.

A few nagging questions are left unanswered: for starters, how exactly did these soldiers *become* zombified in the first place? There's brief mention of a "curse", but beyond that the mystery is never delved into. However, this is an insignificant grumble in the face of an avalanche of gruesome gore and sight gags.

47

DEAD HEAT

1988  Director: Mark Goldblatt

It's not often you see a credit for "chicken animatronics" roll past, but *Dead Heat* isn't your average movie. The highlight of this zombie take on the buddy-cop genre, made by Roger Corman's New World Pictures, comes when the heroes are attacked by the contents of a Chinatown butchers. Yes, this film features zombie chickens...

The storyline riffs on noir classic *DOA*. Treat Williams plays Roger Mortis (groan...), an LAPD cop killed while investigating a series of armed robberies apparently carried out by the undead. Reanimated by his partner using the same tech, Mortis has 10-12 hours to close the case before he dissolves into "an organic stew".

You know those old movies where, unable to afford a famous actor, they hired a sibling (like the Bond spoof *Operation Kid Brother*, starring Neil Connery)? *Dead Heat* could be the screenwriter equivalent. Thanks to the wise-cracking, leather-blousoned Mortis, forever spitting zingers such as "You have the right to remain disgusting!" and "I gotta take a leak so bad, my teeth are floating!", the script feels like an own-brand version of something by *Lethal Weapon* scribe Shane Black. This makes sense when you discover it was written by Black's brother, Terry (Shane, incidentally, also cameos as a highway patrolman).

Dead Heat loses momentum in the last half hour as Black seemingly runs out of gags and concentrates on the plot – which doesn't make a jot of sense (the reveal of the villain's identity is particularly baffling). But it remains a huge amount of fun – especially if you enjoy watching toughs battling away with machine guns (one zombie vs zombie instance of this is almost as hilariously over-extended as the fist-fight in *They Live*), or gooey body-melting horror. Solid support by genre favourites Darren McGavin (star of *Kolchak*), Robert Picardo (*Voyager's* EMH), and a rather frail-looking Vincent Price provides further incentive to watch. But we had you at "zombie chickens", right?

46

VERSUS

2000  Director: Ryuhei Kitamura

Being cool is the greatest virtue. That's what so many people don't seem to understand. They can bang on about Gandhi, but did he wear wrap-around shades and a leather trenchcoat? No, he wore a loincloth and specs. They lionise Mother Teresa, but did she ever spit out deadpan one-liners while firing a handgun, held sideways? No. She was rubbish. Looking cool is all that matters.

Which is something that the makers of this Japanese zombie flick understand. They know the score. Yakuza gangsters are cool. Black leather jackets are cool. Blank-eyed Yakuza in black leather jackets kicking the heads off zombies are really, really cool. Other cool things include: sexy hitwomen with dyed red hair; the Hitchcock-style track-out/zoom-in; nonchalantly shooting people without even bothering to look in their direction; Harley Davidsons; not bothering to wipe away the blood decoratively spattered over your face; scenes where the camera rotates elegantly around a big punch-up.

You're probably thinking "Trenchcoats? Martial arts? This sounds like *The Matrix*!". But *Versus* doesn't cloak itself in a patchwork of trite philosophical references to try and con you that it's got half a brain. Why should it? Being dumb is cool, dude, and *Versus* is as knowingly dumb as a three-chord thrash by the Ramones. The plot? Something to do with a "gate to the other side", with the reincarnations of age-old enemies battling to open the gate, or keep it shut. Don't worry about it too much, the film-makers didn't.

The film's only flaw is its length. Cool should never outstay its welcome. You need to get in there, pose like mad, then get the fuck out of Dodge, and at two hours *Versus* is just a little over-long. All the same, this stylish, hyper-kinetic riot of ultraviolence is glacially cool. Watch it. It'll make you a cooler person.



45

[REC] 2

2009  Directors: Jaume Balagueró & Paco Plaza

If you're a fan of the original *[REC]* (see 21), whether or not you'll be able to stomach this sequel isn't a matter of format – this is no *Blair Witch 2*, shrugging off its old skin to reveal a more conventional shape.

Proceeding immediately from the events of its predecessor, this follow-up to the Spanish not-really-zombies horror takes us back into the apartment building that's the centre of a viral outbreak, once again deploying found-footage trickery to foster a sense of verisimilitude. Those techniques – hand-held camerawork, temporary sound drop-outs, intermittent freezing or distortion of the image – work just as well second time around, and with its slow build-ups of tension followed by sudden bursts of hyper-violence, *[REC] 2* has all the raw immediacy of its forbear. Only a sequence featuring a helmet-cam view is a questionable choice, momentarily making you feel like you've been dropped into a game of *Doom*. Ironically, a technique developed to make videogames feel more immersive now has the opposite effect; feeling overly *fictional*, it rudely yanks you out of the moment.

No, acceptance depends on whether you welcome the broadening out of the franchise's mythology, which makes it even more dubious to classify the *[REC]* films as a zombie series. The mysteriousness of the infection was part of the original's appeal. Here, its exact nature is laid out in unambiguous terms, in a film that arguably has more in common with *The Exorcist* than it does with *Night Of The Living Dead*.

The more we learn of the infection's origins and what it can do, the more bat's-arse the film becomes. Some will reject these developments as absurd. We say embrace the madness – at least it's new territory for a subgenre in which invention is all too rare. Two more *[REC]* films are now in the works: *[REC]3: Genesis* (directed by Plaza) takes the infection to a wedding, and is in the can, while Balagueró is set to direct *[REC]4: Apocalypse*.





44

AMERICAN ZOMBIE

2007 Director: Grace Lee

Neither zombie movies nor the “mockumentary” format are exactly new, but when you combine the two, suddenly you have something fresh. This smart, low-budget indie follows the attempts of documentary-maker Grace Lee and collaborator John Solomon to make a documentary about the “non-living community” of Los Angeles. Lee, incidentally, really *does* make documentaries – prior to *American Zombie* she was best known for *The Grace Lee Project* (in which she explored Asian-American stereotypes by meeting women who share her name) and *Best Of The Wurst* (a short about Berliners’ love for curry-infused sausage!).

Here she introduces us to four subjects, all “high-functioning” zombies. Ivan is a rather loveable skater dude who publishes a zine. Judy works for an organic food company and is clearly keen to pass for human. Joel’s an idealistic activist for ZAG, short for Zombie Advocacy Group (slogan: “We’re here, we’re dead, get used to it!”). Finally there’s florist Lisa, who’s obsessed with finding out who she was before she died. There are sterling performances

across the board – even in their most absurd moments, these characters always seem *real* and relatable.

If it’s gallons of gore you’re after, this film will disappoint – the grossest sight on offer is a brief close-up of a wound oozing maggots, and the make-up generally isn’t that startling (Judy, for example, just looks like she has a bad case of eczema). However, what *American Zombie* does have in spades is dry, understated humour. Sometimes that’s to do with the personality quirks of the zombies (Lisa, for example, has a passion for naff string art), and sometimes it relates to the way they’re treated by others, like the missionary who, sensing a new demographic, declares that, “Jesus was the original zombie!”

American Zombie looks at identity politics and exploitation of the underclass through the prism of the undead. Its sharp satirical edge also extends to the business of documentary-making itself – the camera’s often turned on the filmmakers as they quarrel about methods, with Grace accusing John of the politically incorrect approach of “essentialising zombies to their bodily functions”.

Add to that an ongoing mystery about what sinister activity zombies might get up to when they gather *en masse* (in this case, for an annual festival called Live Dead), which ultimately comes to a head via scenes reminiscent of *The Blair Witch Project*, and you have a movie that works both as a droll observational comedy in the vein of Christopher Guest’s work, and as a drama.

43

RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD 3

1993 Director: Brian Yuzna

Of the four sequels to Dan O’Bannon’s 1985 horror-comedy (see 5), this is the strongest. If you’re expecting laughs, though, you’ll be sorely disappointed. This is a warped love story – one with lashings of sado-masochistic kink – which requires a strong stomach.

It centres on the doomed relationship between teens Curt and Julie. Curt’s dad commands a military base where they’re turning zombies into “bio-mechanical weapons”. After Julie dies in a motorcycle accident, Curt breaks in and uses Trioxin gas to reanimate her. Soon the pair are on the lam, with both the army and a gang of petty criminals on their trail...

In a fascinating twist, Julie – who remains aware, intelligent and able to communicate – discovers the only thing that can bring relief from her ever-gnawing hunger for brains is pain. As the film progresses, she skewers herself with more and more chunks of discarded metal and shards of glass, like an undead version of the hero of Japanese body-horror *Tetsuo*. You expect a little perversion from Brian Yuzna, whose debut *Society* climaxed in a body-melding orgy, but he outdoes himself here, scraping a jagged nail along the intersection between death and eroticism.

True, the moment when Julie’s unveiled as a scantily-clad zombette, all slashed thighs and nipple chains, seems to have less to do with the logic of her situation and more to do with audience titillation, yet her plight remains extremely affecting. The original *Return Of The Living Dead* had moments that encouraged you to feel sympathy for the zombies’ pain, and Yuzna expands on that beautifully.

Julie’s cries for help and self-mutilation make for harrowing viewing, both in and of themselves and as a metaphor for other forms of addiction (drugs, alcohol, self-harm) that blight relationships. The result is a surprisingly moving blood-splattered romance.



BRIAN YUZNA

Director of *Return Of The Living Dead 3*

With Return Of The Living Dead 3, were you deliberately trying to make the first “sexy” zombie?

Yeah, Mindy Clarke was fantastic and we were determined that she also be sexy. She played the part like a junkie, and I thought that worked perfectly. I’d seen a girl on the street near my house that was dressed in cut-off jeans, ripped hose and had her nose pierced and I thought it was a very cool look, a more “street” version of the punks in Dan O’Bannon’s original *Return Of The Living Dead*. Piercings, scarification and tattooing were just beginning to achieve mainstream popularity and I was intrigued by the practices. Of course, I knew they were related to fetishism – and with a strong sexual component too. But I remember when I first saw the Hammer films, with their sexy, bloody vampires, and ever since then I’ve believed that deadly women are a turn-on!

How did you approach making the film compared from the first two?

When I was asked if I’d be interested in making the third one, I jumped at the chance but I mentioned that I’d rather it not be played for laughs. The producers were fine with that and were only adamant that it included brain eating! So I tried to come up with a mythology for the brain eating! I was also interested in doing a love story, but with a zombie twist.

What kind of release did it get?

Not much of one. Trimark had just had a great success with their movie *Leprechaun* and on the back of that, they were planning a big theatrical release for *Warlock 2* and *Return Of The Living Dead 3*. Unfortunately for us, *Warlock 2* came out first and it didn’t do well, so they were unable to afford the wide cinema distribution we’d been promised.

How do you think the film stands up now?

I’m a big fan of zombie movies and I think *Return Of The Living Dead 3* is a good entry in the genre. It delivers the goods, it has moments of real horror, and it’s sexy, gory and original. Even more than all that, it has a lot of heart!

Calum Waddell

42

DEADGIRL

2008  Directors: Marcel Sarmiento & Gadi Harel

Ask someone to describe a zombie movie, and it's likely they'll default to Romero's shambling ghouls invading homes, or Danny Boyle's rather more spring-heeled fiends stalking the streets of an abandoned metropolis. Things they're unlikely to consider include zombie sex slaves, delinquent necrophilia and existential angst – yet these are the keystones of Sarmiento and Harel's twisted *Deadgirl*.

Rickie and JT – two typical indie-movie misfits – bunk off from high school and inevitably end up in the local abandoned asylum. Instead of shit-smear walls and piles of dead flies, in the basement they discover the body of a braindead, starkers young woman chained to a bed and wrapped in plastic. Despite the distinct whiff of putrefaction in the air, the sociopathic JT's thoughts turn to rape, thoughts which aren't even tempered by his discovering that



Teen years are all about experimentation – but necrophilia is still frowned upon.

the woman is undead. Meanwhile, Rickie, “the sensitive one”, has his sights set on a girl with a pulse, but unfortunately in high school secrets never stay secret for long...

With its explicit nudity, boundary-busting aberrant sexuality and an attitude bordering on the irresponsible, *Deadgirl*'s shockingly repulsive high concept may be the most divisive in all of zombie cinema. It doesn't help that the high school is populated almost exclusively by trash-talking bell-ends. In fact, the most sympathetic character isn't Rickie, but Deadgirl – and she would

eat your face given half a chance. Despite all this, screenwriter Trent Haaga (whom Troma fans in particular may be familiar with) is smart enough to build in a redemptive arc for Rickie, and a climactic day of reckoning for JT, who transforms into a zombie pimp by the movie's end.

You could play a dangerous drinking game with the number of indie tropes Sarmiento and Harel raid – not least of which is a score seemingly lifted wholesale from *Donnie Darko* – but they make impressive use of a limited budget with grimy cinematography and



frequent bursts of nauseating gore. The actors fare much better. They may be playing types, but each of them fits the bill down to a greasy hair or busted lip – particularly Noah Segan, whose deranged JT is as memorable a monster as Captain Rhodes. The real innovation comes from Haaga's script, however, which has a refreshingly frank message about the horrors of growing up – face facts: your dreams are not going to come true – and a line in outrageous, pitch-black humour. Far from typical, and in this case that's a very good thing. **Jordan Farley**

41

NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD

1990  Director: Tom Savini

Remaking the movie that kick-started the modern-day zombie genre sounds like an idea every bit as ridiculous as revisiting *Psycho* or *The Wicker Man* (and you probably know how that turned out...). But this isn't an ersatz cash-in by pygmy talents, like *Night Of The Living Dead 3D* or the execrable *Day Of The Dead: Contagium*. This do-over comes from the creative colossus behind the original, with George Romero reworking the screenplay he co-wrote with John Russo first time round, and trusted lieutenant Tom Savini installed in the director's chair. The result could easily have been a remodelling so faithful to the original as to render it utterly pointless, but *Night '90* provides a valid new take on familiar material, one which cleverly incorporates decades' worth of viewer critique.



Watch the 1968 film now and two things are likely to spring to mind. The first is the lack of capable female characters – the female lead, Barbra, spends most of the film practically catatonic. Here, Romero gives the character a Ripley-style makeover – she may still begin the film in a state of shock, but by the final reel she's decked out in combats, vest-top and bullet belt, calmly blasting holes in undead bonces like an expert.

You may also question just why the heroes of the '68 *Night* board themselves up in a farmhouse in the first place – with the ghouls being



Big shoes (and probably pants) to fill: *Night Of The Living Dead* remade.

slow-moving and spread out, wouldn't a more sensible option have been to keep moving? Nu-Barbra voices this very opinion – and also points out that the central conflict between Ben and Cooper is basically a macho pissing contest. It's refreshing to see a filmmaker engaging with audience questions and acknowledging perceived weaknesses and logic gaps.

As you might expect, the action is slightly amped up. What's more interesting is the way Romero's revised screenplay constantly keeps you on your toes: key characters meet

a different fate, sequences are excised or swapped, and George plays with your expectations at times, cunningly subverting them.

Sure, *Night '90* doesn't hit the mark all the time – for one thing, Kyra Schon's replacement as iconic zombie-girl Karen looks far too old, and the excision of her trademark trowel attack feels like sacrilege – but it remains fascinating viewing for Romero buffs. It's probably the nearest George's fans can come to watching their favourite band perform a new arrangement of their biggest hit.

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WHITE ZOMBIE

1932  Director: Victor Halperin

As gorehounds know only too well, horror films have inspired an awful lot of hand-wringing over the years, but *White Zombie* may be the only one that features lots of *literal* hand-wringing. Its star, Bela Lugosi, plays an evil voodoo master whose mesmeric control over his victims seems to boil down to squeezing his mitts together in a most peculiar way!

The first feature-length zombie movie, *White Zombie* was also an independent production, shot largely at Universal Studios, reusing sets and props from numerous Universal horrors (including halls and corridors from *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*).

Lugosi's character, the sinisterly goateed Murder Legendre, may be the villain of the piece, but initially he's only acting at the behest of missionary Charles Beaumont. Beaumont is so smitten by the beautiful Madeleine (Madge Parker) that he's willing to



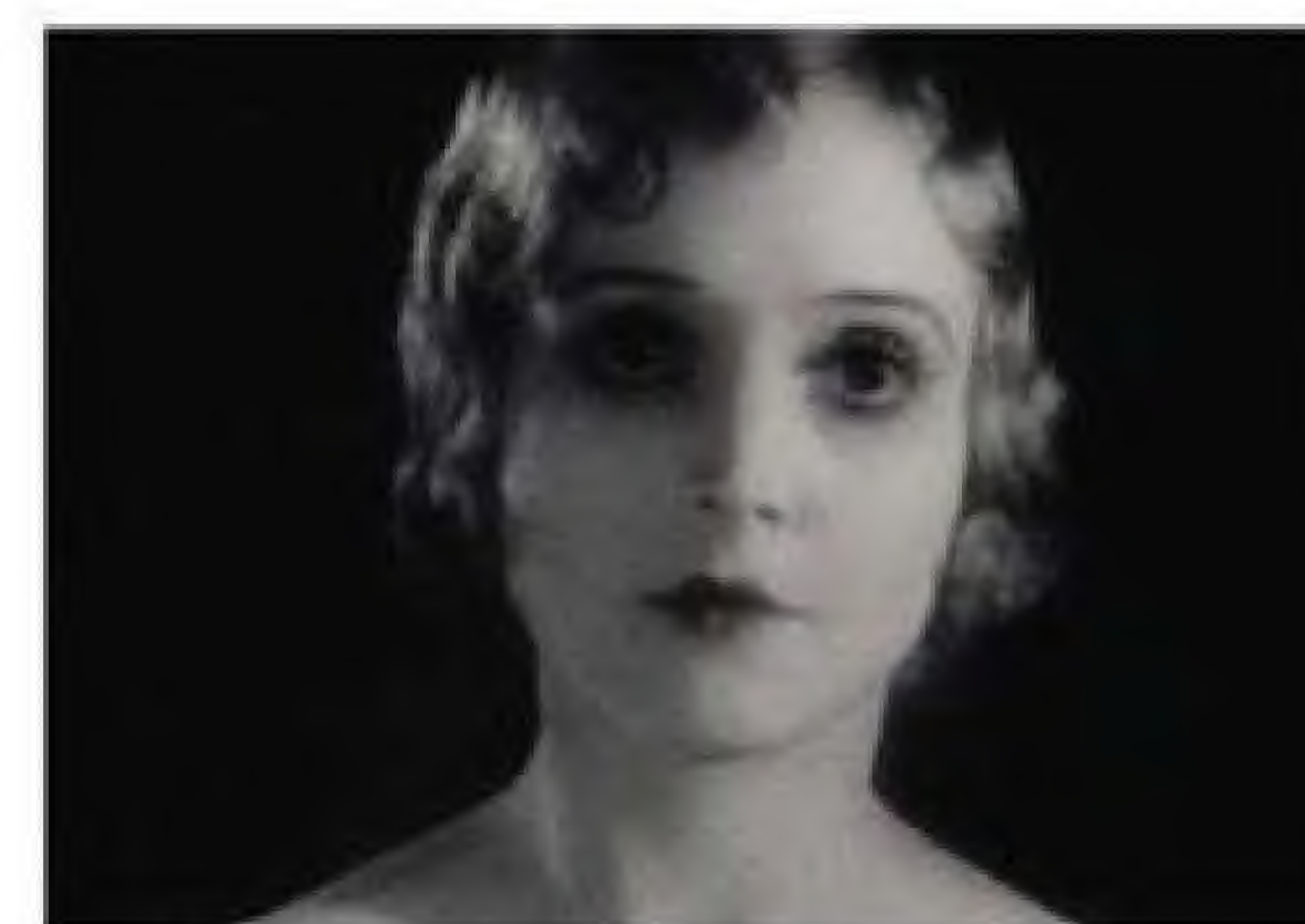
"Who dared suggest Boris Karloff is better at staring than me?"

countenance anything to make her his. The fact that she's getting married doesn't give him pause (he even has a crack at chatting her up as he walks her down the aisle, the cad!). After Legendre puts Madeleine under his spell, making it appear that she has died, Beaumont realises the error of his ways – but unfortunately there's no cancellation clause on this contract.

White Zombie is an entertaining mix of the marvellous and the ludicrous. Lugosi is at the height of his powers, though admittedly the role amounts to little more than boggle-eyed staring and some whittling (it

seems a candle is the perfect source material for a wax effigy). The nails-down-a-blackboard sound design is effective, particularly the grinding of the sugar mill where Legendre's zombified victims are put to work, and the screech of a vulture that at one point amusingly perches above his head, functioning rather like a six-foot-high neon sign flashing the word "EVIL". The sets are impressive too, particularly the aforementioned mill and Legendre's gothic pile.

Unfortunately most of the cast are dreadful over-actors, and certain scenes – such as the finale, during



which the voodoo menace is vanquished when most of the undead conveniently go wandering off a cliff – are likely to inspire hoots of derisive laughter. Still, the film is undoubtedly atmospheric, and its historical significance alone makes it essential viewing for zombie fans.

A word of advice, should you plan to buy *White Zombie* on DVD: since the film has fallen into the public domain, there are scores of different editions available, most of them very poor quality. The one to seek out is the 1999 Roan Group restoration, available on region one.

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PONTYPOOL

2009  Director: Bruce McDonald

"Language", as William Burroughs once put it, "is a virus". It's a notion that infects the zombie movie in this cultish effort, confined almost entirely to one set.

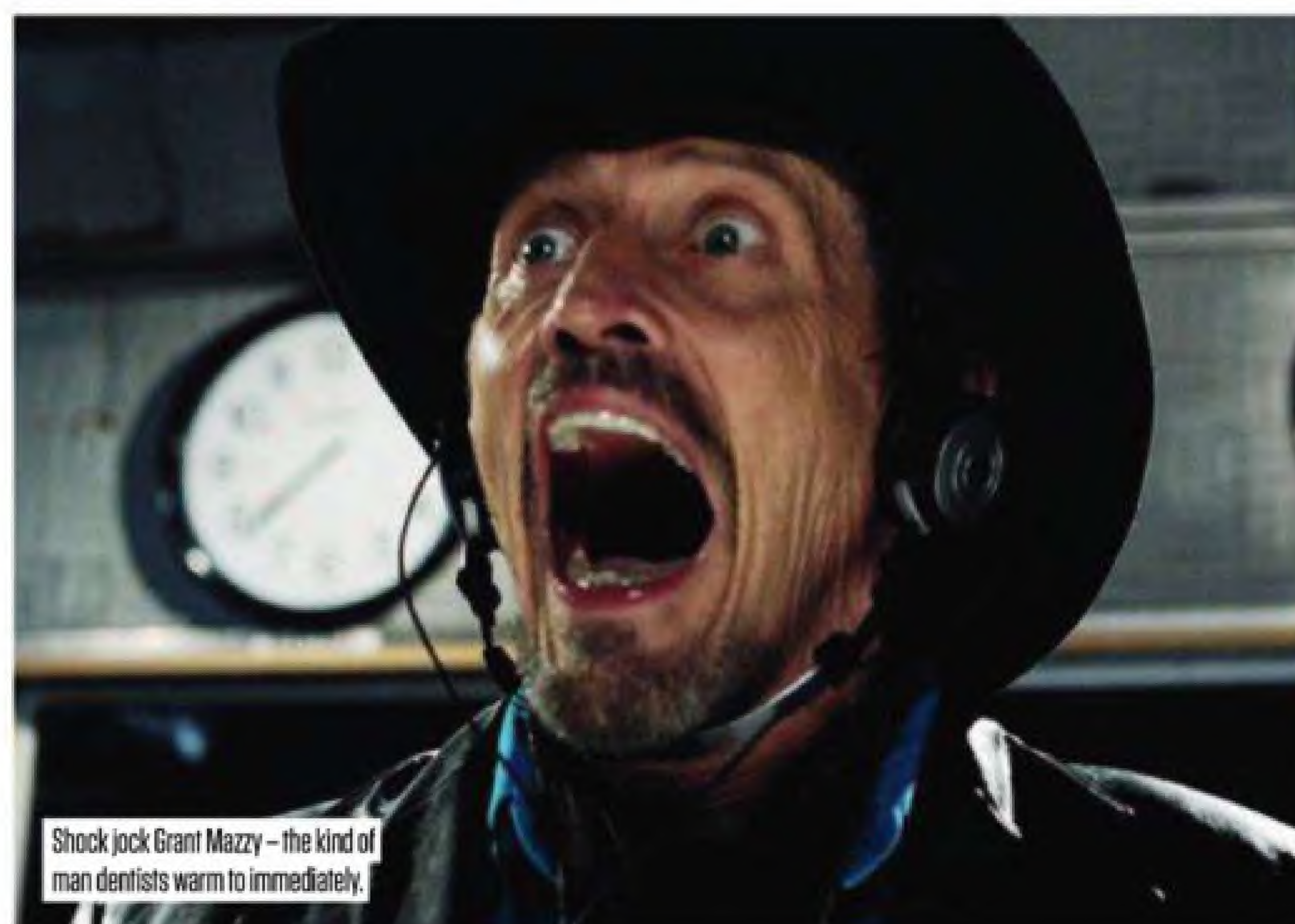
It's based on *Pontypool Changes Everything*, a novel by Tony Burgess, though Burgess's screenplay bears little resemblance to his book – he's called it "a chapter that the book imagined or forgot, or could fit in". Its technique recalls a low-budget war movie that, in the absence of the cash necessary to stage a battle, has characters peering out of a tent to provide a running commentary. It presents a zombie apocalypse (or rather, an Infected one) from the point of view of a small-town radio DJ and his co-workers, trapped in their studio as reports of strange events trickle in.

In its early stages, *Pontypool* rather tests the patience. However, once it gets going, it provides some



surprisingly spine-chilling scenes, with the emphasis on isolated audio working every bit as effectively as the night-vision sequences in *Blair Witch* and *[REC]* to foster a sense of the uncanny. Sometimes having less of the picture helps to create heightened fear and tension. As director Bruce McDonald put it, "It's almost like instead of hiring Industrial Light And Magic to do our special effects, we used the audience's imagination to provide the special effects."

The strange nature of the infection, spread by words that have somehow become infected (the



Shock jock Grant Mazzy – the kind of man dentists warn to immediately.

director refers to the victims as "conversationalists") provides an undercurrent of surreal humour. Victims become locked into a linguistic loop, or start imitating commonplace sounds: a mob chants "Look out for U-boats!", while a girl mimics a singing kettle. Meanwhile, Stephen McHattie, as "voice of truth" shock jock Grant Mazzy, has the sort of 50-Woodbines-a-day voice that vibrates your cochlea as pleasurably as a masseuse working out your muscle knots.

At times you may wonder whether the visuals are really necessary; the project was originally

commissioned as a radio drama, and indeed an audio play version was produced simultaneously (listen to it at tinyurl.com/sfxponty). Sometimes the storytelling could be a little clearer, too. But then, this is just the sort of film that warrants a second viewing.

As for that title? Well, it refers to the place in Ontario in which the film is set, not the one in South Wales (from which the Canadian town took its name). But why Pontypool? According to McDonald, "I think Tony was attracted to the title just cos it sounds slightly pornographic!" Whatever floats your boat...

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NIGHT OF THE SEAGULLS

1975  Director: Amando de Ossorio

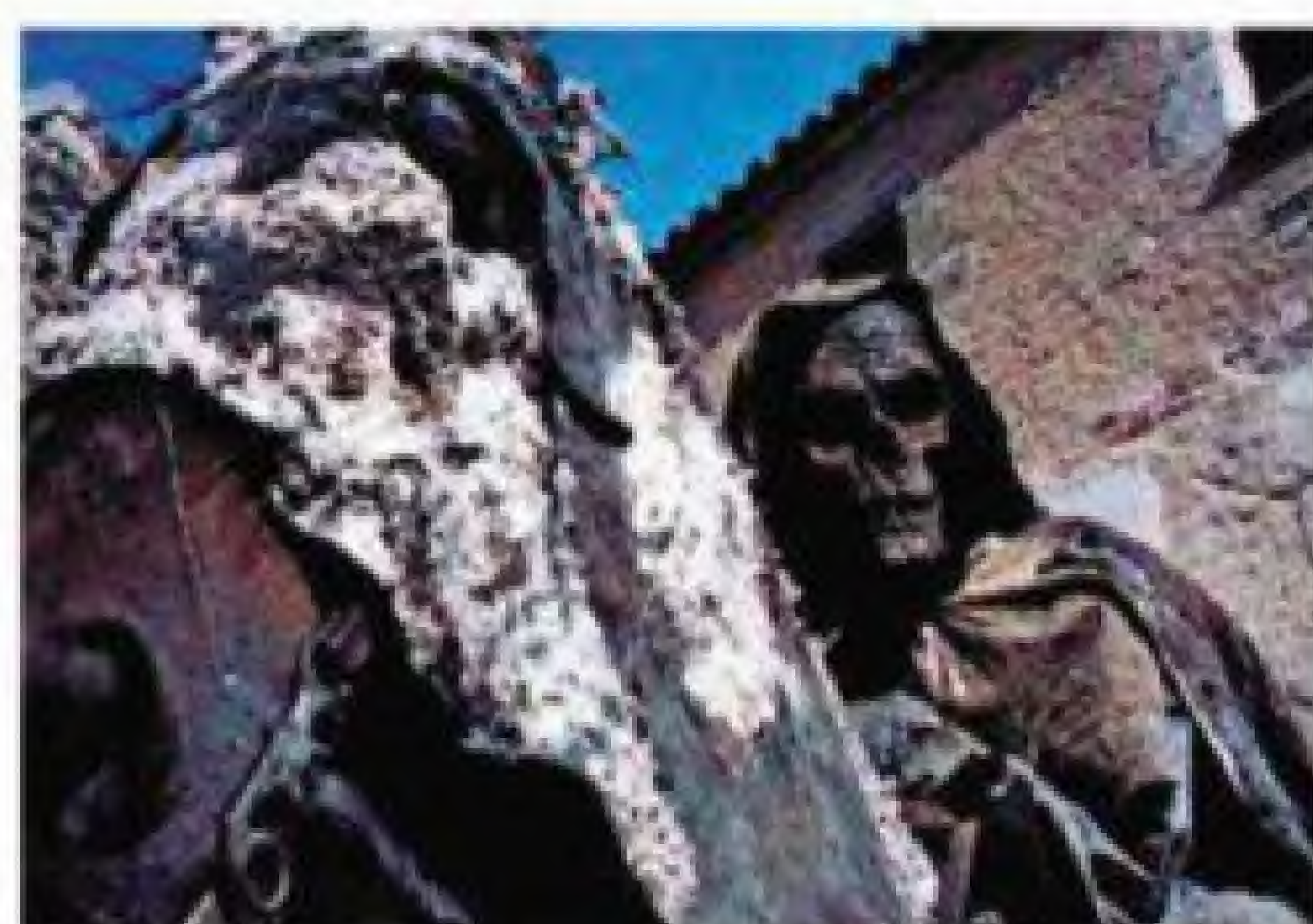
Some may not consider *Night Of The Seagulls* a suitably scary title, but if you've ever had a bag of chips pecked out of your hand in a British seaside town, you'll probably disagree.

This fourth and final entry in the series that began with *Tombs Of The Blind Dead* (see 9) is a return to form after 1974's *The Ghost Galleon*. Once again, Amando de Ossorio reboots the backstory of his shuffling, sightless undead, drawing on HP Lovecraft tales such as "Dagon" and "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" for inspiration. A young doctor and his wife move to a gloomy fishing village, where they discover the secretive, unfriendly locals are sacrificing young virgins. When the doctor interferes, the Blind Dead take their revenge...

This time, there's no mention of the Blind Dead's origins as Knights Templar. Instead, they're referred to as "horsemen of the sea" – confusingly, given that they rise from their graves (in now well-worn stock footage from the first film) from a nearby castle, rather than emerging from the ocean.

Still, the coastal setting is well used: the Blind Dead's trademark slow-mo equestrianism looks even better when they're cantering through the surf, and de Ossorio has a decent stab at loading the local fauna with a sinister charge. The eerie cries of seagulls at night are explained as the doomed spirits of the sacrificed, and the Dead's rituals see their victims suffering a nasty attack of the crabs... Sadly, de Ossorio's budget doesn't stretch to special effect crustaceans, though anyone who's seen the tarantula attack in *The Beyond* (see 3) may conclude that this is no bad thing.

The only fly in the ointment is the ease with which the Blind Dead are defeated – our hero simply has to topple over their weird-looking reptilian idol (possibly of *Danger Mouse's* Baron Greenback) and they all drop. Otherwise, this is a solid end to a generally excellent series.



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THE LIVING DEAD GIRL

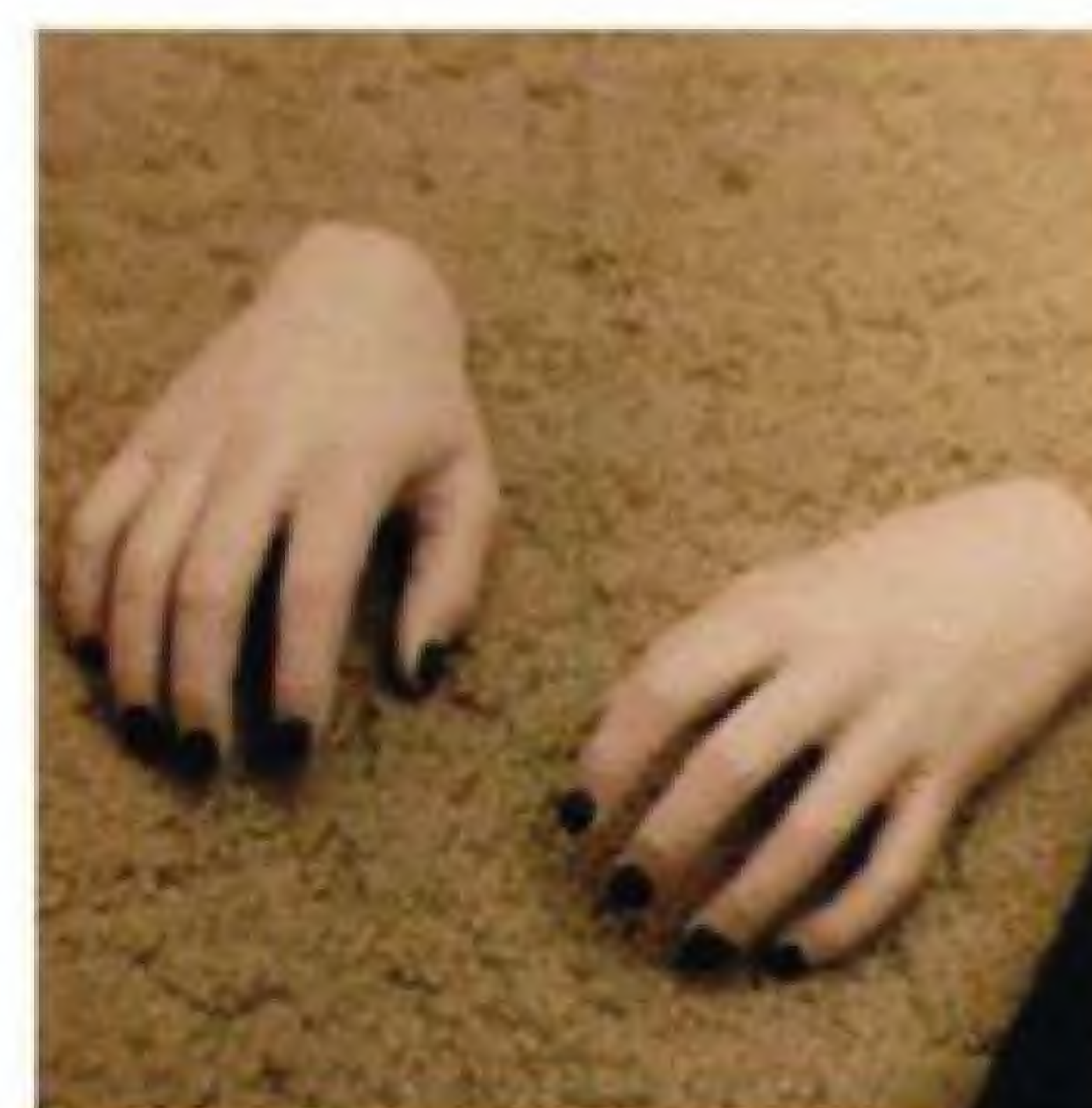
1982  Director: Jean Rollin

What do you expect from a low-budget zombie film? Lousy papier-mâché-and-poster-paint effects? Probably. An undead Catherine Deneuve-alike elegantly strolling around in a flowing white gown and touching flashbacks to childhood flower-pressing? Maybe not.

Unpredictability is a rare thing in cinema, which is why the late French director Jean Rollin is revered by many. *The Living Dead Girl* (aka *La Morte Vivante*) is a typically off-the-wall Rollin effort. It starts off like a grim Italian Romero knock-off, as the release of a mysterious toxic chemical in the catacombs of a château resurrects one Catherine Valmont, who then wanders around slaughtering people with her talon-like fingernails. Later on it goes a bit *Hellraiser* as her childhood friend Hélène lures back strangers to, ahem, join them for dinner, before exploring melancholy arthouse territory as Catherine slowly regains her humanity.


This wasn't Rollin's first foray into zombie territory. In 1981, he hid behind a pseudonym to pick up a paycheck on cruddy Nazi-zombie flick *Zombie Lake*. And in 1978's *The Grapes Of Death*, wine-quaffers are turned into decay-faced psycho killers after a vineyard is sprayed with an experimental pesticide. Essentially Romero's *The Crazies* transplanted to rural France, it's one of Rollin's most straightforward, commercial films.

The Living Dead Girl was unusual in one respect – the director had the chance to rehearse with his cast *before* filming began, which perhaps explains the quality of the performances. In other respects, it's more typical Rollin fare. It mixes poetry and gore, and its bizarre juxtapositions of "classy" (the heroine wanly playing with an antique rocking horse) and "sleazy" (blood spray onto naked breasts) mean it's constantly surprising. Only in a Rollin film can you be wincing at an axe killing one moment and wondering if he's homaging a pre-Raphaelite painting the next...



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THE CHILDREN

1980  Director: Max Kalmanowicz

Zombie children are pretty hard to beat in the creepiness stakes: George Romero proved as much in *Night Of The Living Dead*, with Kyra Schon's trowel-wielding killer. This low-budget indie flick shot in Massachusetts (many of whose crew went on to make *Friday The 13th*) underlines the point.

The set-up is both quaintly old-fashioned and very of its time, as a school bus drives through a yellow cloud of radioactive gas that's leaked from a power station – it's like *The Incredible Shrinking Man* crossed with *Three Mile Island*. Later, the bus is found empty and a search for five missing kids begins. It would be better not to find them, because – inexplicably – they've been transformed into bullet-proof atomic zombies who can microwave you to a crisp with one touch of their black-fingernailed hands. Yikes!

Sadly, many of the deaths occur off-screen (and those that don't showcase rather crappy time-lapse effects), but it's the lead-up to the killings that really chills the blood. One girl lures in her mother by standing with her arms stretched

out for a hug and crying "Mommy!" As Mom starts emitting yellow steam, the daughter has a cheerful grin plastered all over her face. Two of the kids, incidentally, were the offspring of producer/co-writer Carl Albright, who had to bribe one of them into performing with an offer of jam doughnuts!

The Children is far from perfect. The pacing is pretty dreadful, with nothing much happening for great swathes of the time, as the Sheriff wanders from one kid's home to another. The score, by *Friday The 13th's* Harry Manfredini, basically stuffs *Psycho* and *Halloween* into a blender (and may sound more than a little familiar to Jason fans too...).

But what sticks in the memory is the way the kids are defeated. They can only be killed *when their hands are chopped off*. Even hardened horror fans are likely to splutter in disbelief as Gil Rogers's Sheriff hacks little kids' mitts off with a sword.

There is a subtext here, one that'll appeal to those who'd rather stay sporg-free: co-writers Carl Albright and Ed Terry came up with the basic idea shortly after the birth of Albright's first child, when they were discussing how children can come to dominate and control your life, and one or two put-upon parents might smile wryly in recognition as they watch kids *literally* smothering mums and dads to death.

Basically, though, *The Children* is designed to gross people out. It does a pretty good job of that, and manages to provide plenty of unintentional hilarity too.



35

CHILDREN SHOULDN'T PLAY WITH DEAD THINGS

1971 Director: Bob Clark

Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things is one of those movies you feel downright guilty for loving. Shot in a park in Coral Gables, Miami, by a bunch of college buddies for a mere \$40,000, it is in large part a spoofing homage to *Night Of The Living Dead*.

Egotistical theatre director Alan (a self-mocking turn by screenwriter Alan Ormsby, who was also in charge of the make-up effects) takes a troupe of actors to an island graveyard to creep them out with some mock-Satanic invocations. Of course, it's all fun and games until someone gets their throat ripped out... Eventually the dead rise, and it's board-up-the-windows time.

This second half is pure Romero rip-off. It's crude, but has a winning sense of urgency. The first half, meanwhile, is like watching a hippy theatre group improvising a drive-in movie, and a showcase for some hysterical acting (in both senses of the word). The standout freak is Ormsby himself, an egomaniac with a

gloriously florid turn of phrase, resplendent in striped loon pants that Willy Wonka would probably turn down as being too garish.

The technical incompetence is alarming – you find yourself thinking things like, “hang on, that girl’s talking. Why am I looking at the back of her head?” But the scales are balanced by invention. The soundtrack of electronic oscillations is unsettlingly weird, and the script is jam-packed with groan-inducing puns, sardonic one-liners and spaced hippy aphorisms. “Man is a machine for manufacturing manure!” is our favourite – although “I haven’t laughed so much since Granny got caught in the wringer!” comes in a close second. The end result is like watching a Romero rip-off directed by Ed Wood, with a script scribbled by Joe Orton while he was ripped to the tits on poppers. The same writer/director team of Ormsby and Bob Clark (who were roommates at the University Of Miami) went on to collaborate on the superior *Deathdream* (see 10), as well as, er, *Porky’s II: The Next Day* (well, we all have to pay the rent, right?)

The film was marketed with a gimmick worthy of William Castle: all ticket buyers could get their funeral expenses paid in full *if* they were “attacked by a ghoulish cannibal” during a screening. For a few years now, there’s been talk of a possible remake (Bob Clark owns the rights, and has written a script), most recently with Tom Savini’s name attached (see page 74). Don’t hold your breath, though...

34

28 WEEKS LATER

2007 Director: Juan Carlos Fresnadillo

When the credits roll on *28 Days Later* (see 16) you feel that the film’s world has been fully explored, and nothing worthwhile remains to be said. So the announcement of a sequel inevitably inspired fears of a crass DTV effort, lacking the original’s visual poetry. But *28 Weeks Later* is a pleasant surprise.

Six months on from the original outbreak, the Infected have starved to death, and a Yank-led NATO force is repopulating Blighty (quibble: couldn’t the British troops overseas return to take charge?). Father-of-two Don (Robert Carlyle) is reunited with his kids in a safe zone on the Isle of Dogs. Unbeknownst to everyone, though, the rage virus has mutated...

After a low-key, character-led opening act, the film becomes infected with the action virus. What follows is an extended chase, with a diminishing group of survivors hurtling from one setpiece to another. Fortunately, some of those are powerful enough to stick in the memory, and some adrenaline-pumping hand-held camerawork helps create palpable urgency.

The sequel feels much more like a “zombie film” than its forebear. There are exploding heads aplenty, and it even kicks off with a *Night Of The Living Dead*-style prologue featuring the Infected breaking into a boarded-up farmhouse. It’s far more violent than Danny Boyle’s film, with carnage meted out by gun, flamethrower and helicopter rotor blade.

Spanish director Juan Carlos Fresnadillo still strives to evoke the spirit of *28 Days Later*, and sometimes nails it, matching Boyle’s postcards of a deserted Westminster with images of tanks rumbling past the Millennium Dome and US soldiers on patrol in suburban streets. But his film lacks the idiosyncratic unpredictability of the original – it’s more of a cookie-cutter action-horror; a blunt object. Still, it’s about as good as we could reasonably have expected. Shame that, with the rights-holders no longer talking to each other, we’re unlikely to see *28 Months Later* any time soon.



33

FIDO

2006 Director: Andrew Currie

Sometimes it feels like all you need to crack a career in the movies is one perfect sentence, a phrase that sets the imagination racing, and *Fido*’s pitch is a peach: “zombies in *Pleasantville*”. It’s an irresistible idea, one this Canadian zomcom explores with sly satire and considerable charm.

One shot neatly encapsulates the approach: a jet of blood splashing onto a white picket fence. The setting is a ’50s small-town world of shiny automobiles, side partings and vibrant Technicolor, the sort of place where mom sublimates her simmering sexual energies into the baking of delicious apple pies. In this parallel-universe ’50s, a radioactive cloud has resurrected the dead. Fortunately, the “domestication collar” means zombies can now serve society – and if you want to keep up with the Joneses, you simply *must* have one...

Pleasantville is just one obvious reference point (though director Andrew Currie says he took inspiration from ’50s melodramas such as *Peyton Place*). The Robinson family’s newest addition, Fido (Billy Connolly – utterly unrecognisable, but impressively expressive) is a close relative of Bub in *Day Of The Dead*. And Fido’s one-boy-and-his-zom relationship with little Timmy Robinson is pure *Lassie* pastiche.

It’s obvious that something will go wrong and events will snowball out of control. But the film cleverly works through its concept’s ramifications (kids have daily rifle-shooting practice; dad’s obsessed with saving to become one of the few rich enough to actually be *buried*). It also has depth, with Currie satirising Homeland Security culture via some swift jabs about state control in a paranoid society.

It’s a sweetly likeable film, too – an odd thing to say, considering that it includes an old lady being battered to death with a shovel, as well as a frustrated housewife flirting with a walking corpse. Throw *Fido* a bone and you’ll find it wide-eyed and waggy-tailed, eager to please.





32

ZOMBIELAND

2009 Director: Ruben Fleischer

Zombieland is the zombie movie for people who don't like zombie movies. For dedicated fans of the genre, observing its success is rather like watching a band with lowest common denominator appeal topping the album charts, while the more innovative musicians who inspired them languish in obscurity. It certainly isn't a bad film, but the fact that of all the movies on IMDb tagged with the keyword "zombies", *this* is the third-highest rated, rankles a little.

Here's one issue we have, for starters: considering this is a film entitled *Zombieland*, it doesn't actually feature a lot of zombies. For the most part (until the climactic scenes in an amusement park), our heroes don't encounter many of the undead, instead driving down empty highways and wandering, unmenaced, through deserted suburban streets. If millions of people have been infected, where did they all go?

Admittedly, this is at times a highly amusing film, particularly when it comes to the rules expounded by student geek Columbus (Jesse Eisenberg), which include "the double

tap", "beware of bathrooms" and "check the back seat". Others could include something along the lines of, "When taking over an abandoned house, consider shutting the curtains, checking the doors are locked and keeping quiet, instead of blasting out Ray Parker Jr", "Don't fire machine guns in the air just for the hell of it", and "Turning on all the rides in a theme park *may* attract attention". But such rules don't seem to be necessary in this movie. As zombie apocalypses go, it's a stroll in the park.

That's why *Shaun Of The Dead* is a superior movie. In *Shaun* there's always a sense of danger to throw the comedy into relief, and a real emotional depth. In *Zombieland* – as in Wes Anderson's oeuvre – characters often seem to be little more than an accumulation of quirks: an irrational fear of clowns; an obsessive love of Twinkies. Only when we learn that Tallahassee (Woody Harrelson) had a young son does he start to feel like a real person, not a cartoon.

Don't get us wrong: *Zombieland* is great fun, particularly the all-action finale (shot at the Wild Adventures theme park in Valdosta, Georgia). Who could fail to love a movie in which Woody Harrelson machine-guns hordes of zombies while hanging off a fairground ride? Hopefully it functions as a kind of gateway drug of the undead. But if you think this is the best zombie movie of all time – or even in the top five – then you're in *serious* need of some further education. Keep right on reading, kid, and we'll give you a few pointers.



31

THE DEAD

2011 Directors: Howard & Jonathan Ford

Sometimes all you need to do to make a familiar story feel fresh is to transplant it into a different landscape, as the newest of all the films on this list demonstrates. *The Dead* (shot mostly in Burkina Faso and Ghana) does just that, by showing us a zombie apocalypse unfolding in West Africa.

Our identification character is American Brian Murphy (Rob Freeman) who, it eventually turns out, is an engineer for the US army. Stranded in the middle of nowhere when the last plane out of the country crash-lands, he teams up with a young African soldier who's searching for his missing son. We watch as the two slowly bond in the face of adversity.

The Dead specialises in three things. The first is ticking-clock sequences: as Murphy struggles to open a crate full of weapons or get a car running before he's surrounded by the undead, it's incredibly tense. The second is remarkably realistic, gory make-up; early on we see a zombie staggering along on a broken leg, bone poking through the skin, and it's so believable that just for a moment you wonder whether the filmmakers might have trawled the local hospitals for accident victims in desperate need of a few dollars. And the third? Unremitting bleakness. Don't watch this film if you're after a comforting happy ending.

Freeman barely gets to say a word for the first 20 minutes of the movie – and to be honest that's a good thing, since once the dialogue does kick in, much of it is rather clichéd. But that doesn't matter a great deal in the grand scheme of things. *The Dead* is a film that doesn't waste your time, dropping you straight into the middle of the nightmare. It's also grim, tense, constantly surprising and, thanks to shots of desert vistas and fabulous rock formations, has moments of awe-inspiring natural beauty too.

HOWARD AND JONATHAN FORD
Directors of *The Dead*

You're both successful commercial directors. Why the switch to zombies, and why Africa?

Jonathan: I'd wanted to make this film since seeing Romero's *Dawn Of The Dead*. It gave me nightmares for months, and it's the reason I got into the business. There have been some terrible zombie movies, but we wanted to make something totally authentic that people had never seen before. Going to Africa allowed us to bring in so many different layers of meaning.

How difficult a choice of location was it for an independent shoot?

Howard: On the first day I got mugged at knifepoint. The police tried to put me in jail for driving without a licence. It took us five weeks to get our cameras out of the port and we'd all gone stir crazy before shooting one frame. Then things really started to get bad...

Jonathan: There was endless police corruption, and our vehicles usually wouldn't get past all the roadblocks. We'd be diverting into the jungle at night to try and make it through without being seen or shot at.

Howard: We had a Land Rover full of limbs and crates of AK47s...

Jonathan: Then we'd break down. Then we'd run out of fuel. Then we'd run out of water. We often wondered if we'd ever get out alive.

Howard: Rob Freeman, our lead, collapsed on set with cerebral malaria. He was rushed to a mosquito-infested hospital and the doctor told us he'd die within 24 hours. We looked like we'd come out of a concentration camp by the end. Photos weren't shown to our parents for fear of worrying them!

You went places where no-one had seen a film crew before. Did locals take to playing zombie extras?

Howard: That's part of the horror of *The Dead*: some of our "zombies" were literally starving to death. The only good thing about the shoot was having the chance to help them.

Jonathan: We could pay them decent money, treat them with respect – and all they had to do was walk slowly or lie down. They just couldn't believe it. You couldn't keep the smiles off their faces – not a good look for zombies!

Paul Bradshaw

30

ZOMBIE FLESH EATERS

1979  Director: Lucio Fulci

If anyone asks you what the cinema of the undead has contributed to the sum total of human knowledge, point them at *Zombie Flesh Eaters* (aka *Zombi 2*). Thanks to director Lucio Fulci, we know that a zombie can kick a shark's ass in a fight. Mind you, given that the aquatic scrapper loses an arm in the process, maybe we should consider it a draw.

Fulci's first tangle with the undead was an important milestone in the genre, inspiring a flood of imitations from his countrymen (see page 48 for much more on this), but it's not his best work. It begins enigmatically, with the mysterious arrival of a yacht in New York Harbor – a yacht that turns out to be carrying two zombies. The climax is satisfyingly action-packed: besieged on the Caribbean island on which



Graphic ocular damage helped earn *Zombie Flesh Eaters* a ban in the UK.

the outbreak originated, the main characters (led by Ian McCulloch's Peter West, a heart-warming reminder of the days when a balding English journalist was considered a suitable hero) lob Molotov cocktails at the advancing hordes. Sadly, in between there's often a sense that the film is treading water, and that a more interesting tale is unfolding, unseen, as the infection spreads back in the Big Apple.

A couple of outrageous examples of Fulci's blood-splattered showmanship keep you hooked. In one infamous wince-inducing moment, a woman's eyeball is impaled

on a jagged shard of wood. Then there's the aforementioned rumble between a tiger shark and a zombie – actually Mexican marine biologist/documentarian Ramón Bravo. A colleague of Jacques Cousteau, Bravo wrote the novel on which 1978 *Jaws* cash-in *Tintorera* was based, and hired himself out to the movie industry as a shark wrangler (he also arranged the shark tank sequence in *Licence To Kill*).

Zombie Flesh Eaters' other great strength is Gianetto De Rossi's make-up. At their best, De Rossi's zombies really *look* like they've just dragged their rotting carcasses




out of the grave. His centuries-old Conquistador zombie, with its jagged teeth and disintegrating flesh, worms wriggling in an empty eye socket, is infinitely superior to the blue-faced background zombies that blight *Dawn Of The Dead*.

If only the script was of such high quality. If it's gore you're after, *Zombie Flesh Eaters* delivers (which explains why it was only finally released uncut in the UK as recently as 2005), but as far as storytelling goes... well, let's just say that if you strategically skipped through the DVD, just watching five key chapters, you wouldn't be missing all that much.

29

LAND OF THE DEAD

2005  Director: George Romero

The big surprise about George Romero's long-awaited return to the genre after a 20-year absence was this: the zombies haven't only taken over the world, but they've become

the dominant sympathetic characters too. Romero's always confessed to having a soft spot for his "stanches", but in this fourth entry in the *Dead* series, they're practically the heroes to be cheered on. Humanity is venal, greedy, selfish. The undead are just trying to survive.

If a newbie director had taken the liberties that George takes here, zombiephiles would have been up in arms. True, George's zombies haven't put on their running spikes, but he's done something far more radical. They've evolved. Not only do they work out how to use tools and shoot guns, but they also start

to communicate – to feel empathy. They become a *community*. In Marxist terms, it's as if they've had an outbreak of class consciousness.

The Bolshevik of the piece is Big Daddy, a zombie who leads his undead brothers over the river into the human enclave of Fiddler's Green, where the lucky few live in a bubble of consumerist splendour. The spider at the centre of this web is Kaufman, a masterly essay in subdued menace by the late Dennis Hopper, who styled his performance after Bush-era Secretary Of Defence Donald Rumsfeld. It's here that the traditional Romero subtext makes

itself felt, as the director illustrates how totalitarianism can thrive when a community lives in fear. However, barring the odd smart line (at one point Kaufman snaps, "We don't negotiate with terrorists!"), the post-9/11 subtext is underplayed. The more resonant theme is the growing gap between rich and poor; how the ghettos of the underclass exist cheek-by-jowl with the hermetically sealed enclaves of the super-rich.

The film's one big problem is a major subplot. That human enclave is serviced by commandos in an armoured battle-truck called Dead Reckoning. When one of Kaufman's disenchanted lackeys (John Leguizamo) steals this weapon to turn it against him, a guys-on-a-mission storyline ensues. It all seems rather conventional, rather *Hollywood action movie* for a Romero film. You end up wishing they'd get back to the zombies, and the richly detailed world created by George and his production designers.

Because of that subplot (and a curiously upbeat ending), there are moments when this feels like AN Other Zombie Movie rather than a Romero film. But for the most part, it's just what you'd expect from George: the same idiosyncratic mix of gore, political comment and gallows humour.



The zombies get to grips with guns and tools in *Land Of The Dead*.





Forget the story and just revel in *Black Magic 2*'s madcap excess.



28

BLACK MAGIC 2

1976 🇨🇳 Director: Meng Hua Ho

Other movies have “aim for the head!”, but *Black Magic 2* had a zombie-slaying slogan, it'd be “reach for the pliers!” In this grotesque, ultra-sleazy Hong Kong horror from the Shaw Brothers Studio (best known for its martial arts movies), a black magician turns corpses into his slaves by driving whacking great nails into their heads. Extract the nails and gruesome super-ageing and face-melting ensues. The novelty of this Eastern take on the undead provides a slither of intellectual justification for viewing, but nowhere enough to make it a respectable pursuit.

The villain of the piece, Kang Chung, is clearly a Bond fan, judging by his penchant for both stroking a Siamese cat and Roger Moore eyebrow acting. An octogenarian, he maintains a youthful appearance by drinking *human milk*. In one jaw-dropping sequence, he summons a young woman to his lair, shaves off her pubic hair, sets it alight and drops the remains in what looks like a glass of Night Nurse (don't try this cocktail at home – it tickles the throat something terrible). After drinking

this concoction, the bewitched girl starts to lactate and, when Kang Chung settles down to suckle, becomes so erotically excited that frenzied shagging follows...

That's the most excessive sequence in the film, but there's stiff competition. Other delights include a rubber crocodile attack, a kung fu fight on a cable car, a mutant foetus, the villain being beaten with a dead cat, and a voyeuristic sex scene that makes the granny-love episode of *Misfits* look positively tasteful.

The fashions are deliciously '70s – all wing collars and tight slacks – and the soundtrack is fabulous, combining atonal clattering, funky breakbeats and fuzz guitar. One track (which plays as a dancer gyrates in a nightclub) was sampled for the Beastie Boys' “Looking Down The Barrel Of A Gun”.

The story doesn't amount to much, boiling down to “some doctors investigate a series of mysterious deaths” (and even “investigate” is overstating the case – the trail quickly leads to Kang because “people say he's responsible”). But that's unlikely to concern you much in the face of *Black Magic 2*'s onslaught of graphic excess.

If you survive a viewing without your brain ordering your eyeballs to melt in self-defence, seek out more films by the same director, such as *Black Magic* (which you don't need to watch first) and *The Oily Maniac*, plus the equally OTT horrors of fellow Shaw Brothers director Chih-Hung Kuei (particularly *The Boxer's Omen* and *Corpse Mania*).

27

PLANET TERROR

2007 🇺🇸 Director: Robert Rodriguez

If you're gonna enjoy *Planet Terror*, it'll help if you're the sort of sick puppy who's fascinated by photos of flesh-eating viruses and tickled by amputee gags.

Stateside, it originally screened as the opening half of *Grindhouse*, Rodriguez's double-bill team-up with Quentin Tarantino. Fortunately, once hacked apart from its conjoined twin, *Planet Terror* works just fine. It bears little relation to any *real* grindhouse fare, mind, unless you think John Carpenter made grindhouse movies – its laconic tough guys, hardboiled dialogue and '80s synth squelches are all pure Carpenter.

After experimental biochemical weapons are released into the air at an army base, people begin mutating into bubo-faced, pus-squirting crazies. Cue shoot-outs, exploding cars and more bodily dismemberment than you can shake a ripped-off arm at.

On paper, it's unspeakably grim. On screen, its hyperbolic, slapstick approach to gore is a whole lot of dirty fun. It's too self-consciously cool to label as a spoof, but if you took *Tremors*, gave it some eightball tats, then tipped a bucketload of offal over it, it'd look a lot like *Planet Terror*.

The characters are B-movie archetypes. There's a button-badgeable one-liner every few minutes: “Go-go, not cry cry”; “Some of the best jokes are about cripples!”; “As useless as the pecker on the Pope”. And Rose McGowan plays a stripper with a machine-gun for a leg. Huh huh. Cool.

At times Rodriguez goes too far: poor Naveen Andrews (*Lost*'s Sayid) is saddled with a ridiculous penchant for cutting his enemies' nuts off, and QT's inevitable cameo as a leering rapist adds an unpleasant tang of misogyny that isn't washed away by his character's comeuppance.

Still, as dumb movies go, *Planet Terror* is pretty damn smart. If it had been made in 1982, it'd probably be a cult classic by now.



26

CITY OF THE LIVING DEAD

1980 🇮🇹 Director: Lucio Fulci

Zombies: should they be able to leg it, or be restricted to a stately stagger? Once you've watched *City Of The Living Dead* (also known as *The Gates Of Hell*), the whole argument seems rather redundant. Never mind running: in this film, Italian director Lucio Fulci's zombies (who look like they've just fallen face-forward into their bolognese) can *teleport*.

Why? God knows. Look for logic in a Fulci film and you'll come back empty handed; the plot is generally a flimsy pretext for outbursts of the irrational. In this case, a priest's suicide opens a portal to Hell in Dunwich (ring any bells, Lovecraft fans?), a village apparently “built on the remains of Salem” (yes, we thought Salem was still standing as well). Cue all manner of “horrendously awful things... Things that would shatter your imagination!”, such as an unlucky chap having his head forced into an industrial drill, and a blizzard of maggots – a sequence which star Catriona MacColl regularly cites as evidence of Fulci's sadistic streak.

The baffling ending infuriates many. The characters are all ciphers – particularly reporter Peter Bell (Christopher George) who, with his sports jacket casually slung over his shoulder, looks like he should be crooning to divorcees on a cruise ship. And some of the director's tricks – such as zooming in on a character's eyes – recur so often that it becomes downright laughable.

However, with its fog-shrouded settings and Fabio Frizzi's doomy, heartbeat-aping score, *City Of The Living Dead* is undeniably tremendously atmospheric. Plus the gore setpieces are simply jaw-dropping, particularly the one where a young woman pukes up her intestines (actually a plateful of sheep tripe – yuck!) at considerable length. While not as outlandish as Fulci's finest fever-dream, *The Beyond* (see 3), it's still startlingly crackers.





25

THE PLAGUE OF THE ZOMBIES

1966 Director: John Gilling

One of four films shot back-to-back by Hammer and released as double bills, this thrifty production shared sets with *The Reptile* and was released as a support feature to *Dracula: Prince Of Darkness*.

The story unfolds not in one of Hammer's typical mittel-European settings, but in a small Cornish village. André Morell plays professor of medicine Sir James Forbes. Called in by the local GP following a series of unexplained deaths, he soon discovers that the graves in the cemetery are mysteriously empty...

Pitting an upper class figure who exerts a baleful influence over young women against a professorial protagonist, *Plague* has much in common with 1958's *Dracula*. Continuing the echoes of Stoker, much of the incident concerns the attempts of the local squire (who returned from a sojourn in Haiti with a mastery of voodoo) to bring our heroes' womenfolk under his thrall; human sacrifice is the rationalisation, but exactly why that's necessary is never explained.

Despite a faint whiff of *déjà vu*, the film is a great success. Morell is outstanding as Sir James, a Holmes/Watson composite who's both likeably

grouchy (his idea of affectionate banter is telling his daughter he "should have drowned her at birth"), and a game old bird, surprisingly willing to dig up a recently-interred corpse for an illicit autopsy.

Class warriors will find plenty that chimes with their worldview: Squire Hamilton's goons are a hissable gang of red-coated fox hunters (who at one point pursue Sir James's daughter like their regular prey) and while Count Dracula can be seen as a metaphor for class exploitation, Squire Hamilton requires zero interpretation. His motivation – one of the most bizarre in horror cinema – is assembling a cheap workforce for his tin mine! Maggie Thatcher must be kicking herself that she never thought of that.

The British censors labelled the script "insane rubbish", and you can still appreciate what occasioned their pursed-lipped disdain. Our first sight of a zombie comes when one rears up unexpectedly and *tosses a corpse* (the strikingly beautiful Jacqueline Pearce, later *Blake's 7*'s Servalan) straight at the camera. The scene in which she emerges from the grave, smiling seductively as she advances, only to be decapitated with a shovel, remains powerfully eerie. So does the dream sequence that follows, where the dead (whose make-ups incorporated crumpled tissue paper!) rise from their graves en masse; all Dutch angles and dry ice, it feels like the missing link between the voodoo-zombie horrors of the '20s and '30s and Romero's flesh-eaters.

Over the years Hammer made seven Frankenstein films, but only one featuring zombies. It's a crying shame that they never went back to that particular well.



24

RE-ANIMATOR

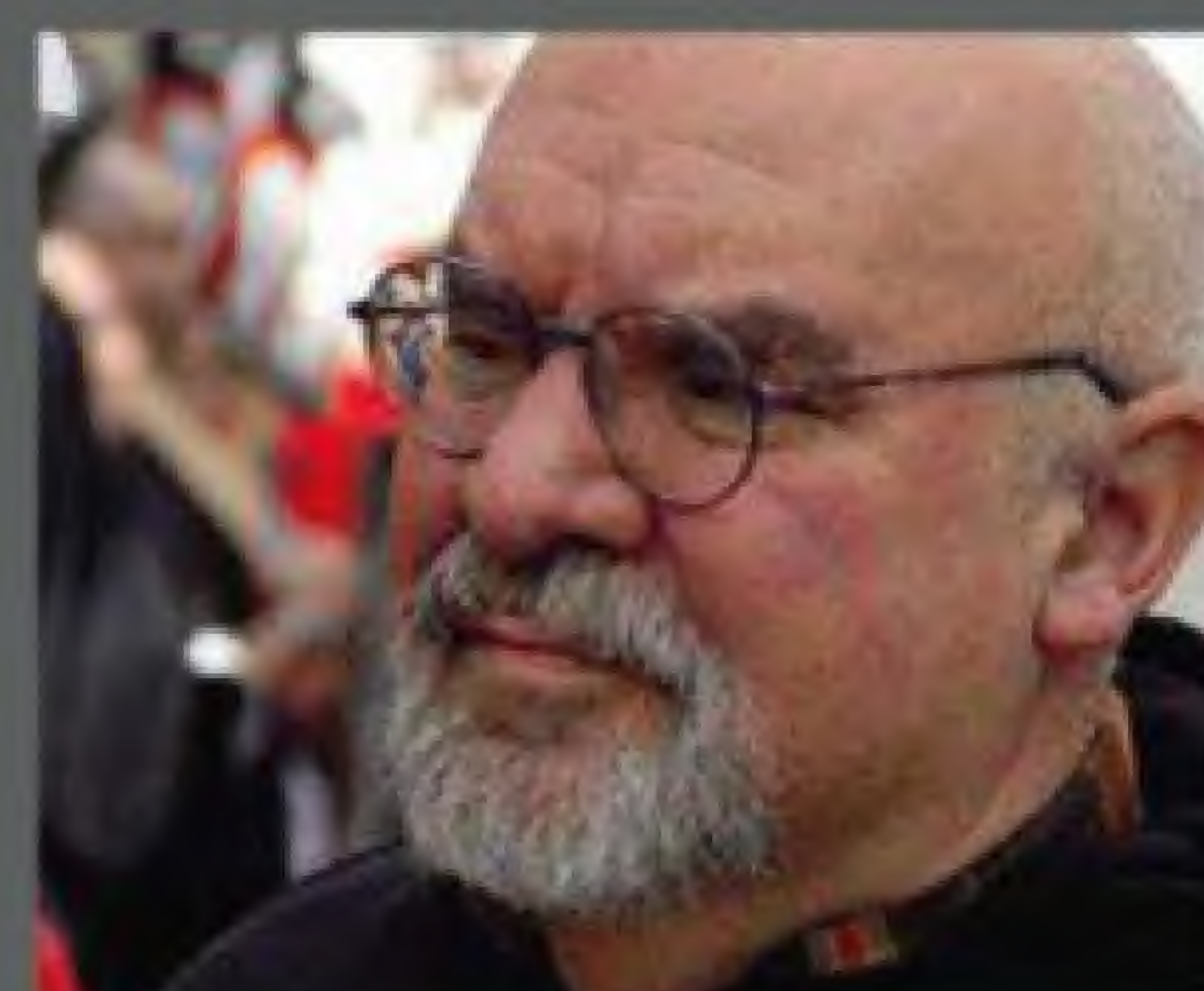
1985 Director: Stuart Gordon

HP Lovecraft's "Herbert West – Reanimator", serialised in 1922, is one of zombie cinema's few literary forebears (though it is itself the offspring of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*). Stuart Gordon's gore-comedy takes a loose approach to adaptation. Elements are maintained: the young West's method – injecting a reanimating serum into recently-deceased corpses; his experiments with reviving bodily parts. Others are disregarded: Lovecraft's story follows Herbert's experiments over many years; and thankfully discarded is an incident where West revives an African-American boxer described as a "gorilla-like" monstrosity.

Genre favourite Jeffrey Combs is superb in the lead role, bringing West's "ice-cold intellectualism" to life with furrow-browed intensity; the lugubrious David Gale is equally good as antagonist Dr Hill, whose desire to get one over on his upstart student continues post-mortem.

Lovecraft's story was already full of grotesque humour, but Gordon turns the dial up to 11. Events become madder, the body-horror ever-more OTT, to the point where you may start to feel faint: featuring decapitation by shovel and intestines that attack like a boa constrictor, *Re-Animator*'s not for the squeamish. Only when a young woman's threatened with sexual assault by a *decapitated head* does Gordon's assault on good taste briefly cease to feel like outrageous fun: luckily, he pulls back from the brink before it dives between her thighs.

A synopsis makes the film sound like a simple catalogue of atrocities, but there's a comic-book exuberance to its cavalcade of ghoulish sights, and something charmingly mom-and-pop about the old-school effects – when a severed head speaks, you're conscious of the rest of the actor, hidden out of shot. Best served with a bottle of your animating agent of choice, *Re-Animator* won't cause you to think, but will make you wince, guffaw and howl in delighted disbelief.



STUART GORDON

Director of
Re-Animator

The idea of a horror-comedy was still quite a fresh thing when the film came out, right?

Absolutely – we were trying to do something new... We wanted to be as outrageous as we could, and push the boundaries as far as possible. When you're doing a low-budget horror film you need to separate yourself from the pack and break all the rules. So that was what was on our minds... I think that might be why *Re-Animator* went down well with audiences – it was like audience participation in a way: when it came out people would go back and see it again and again and play along with what was on-screen. I don't think viewers knew if they should scream or laugh – and sometimes they did both at the same time!

The soundtrack was criticised for ripping off the score to Psycho.

I had said to our composer, Richard Band, that I loved Bernard Herrmann and wanted something like that, and he did it almost as a joke – he wanted to have a credit that read "with apologies to Bernard Herrmann"! Somehow it got left out and he got a lot of shit over the years from people thinking that he stole the music. We even got a letter from the Herrmann Estate telling us that if Bernard was still alive we would have been sued!

Did many walk out when Herbert West resurrects a cat, the animal goes insane and he kills it again?

A lot of people walked out of the movie, but not during that scene. The sequence that caused most people to leave the theatre was where David Gale is showing them how to remove a brain during an autopsy. That was originally a lot longer too. That was when people would head to the exits!

Did Barbara Crampton have issues with the nude scene where she gets licked by a decapitated head?

We originally cast somebody else, and at the last minute she got scared and decided not to do it. She said she'd spoken to her mother, who told her this was a big mistake. So we went back to square one, which is when Barbara came in and – hey! – she was a very brave girl.

Calum Waddell

23

DEAD & BURIED

1981  Director: Gary Sherman

If you know of this little gem but haven't actually seen it, you may have been led into inaccurate assumptions by three things: the striking poster image (which features a face emerging from the earth), mention of "the creators of *Alien*", and the fact that it was caught up in the video nasties panic of the early '80s.

Although *Alien* scribes Dan O'Bannon and Ronald Shusett were credited for the script, they actually reworked an earlier screenplay by Alex Stern and Jeff Millar. O'Bannon said he performed minimal script doctoring and only reluctantly agreed to have his name attached for commercial reasons, which rather suggests that Stern and Millar deserve more credit.

We don't see any living dead clawing their way out of the ground, either. James Farentino plays the Sheriff in a small coastal town who's



Labelled a video nasty, *Dead & Buried* is actually a very atmospheric fable.

faced with a series of violent murders of visitors. Some of these victims are later seen walking around – someone is using black magic to reanimate corpses. How many of the population of Potters Bluff (motto: "A New Way Of Life") are *really* alive?

Dead & Buried's status as a video nasty rests principally upon one jolting moment, in which a bandaged burns victim has a syringe jabbed into his eye by a nurse (some of the work of effects genius Stan Winston). If director Gary Sherman (who was also behind sublime London Underground cannibal horror *Death Line*) had had his way, further scenes

of gore (one man is slashed in the face with a harpoon, another has tubes stuck up his nostrils and acid pumped into his face) would never have been shot. The studio changed hands while the film was being made, and these inserts were foisted upon the director by his financiers.

Strip them away and this is a dark fairytale with a subdued palette of blues and greens, which builds mood via the use of fog and shadow – more of an eerie "weird tale" or magical fable than an exercise in gore. It also has a timeless feel, thanks partly to the use of big band 78s on the soundtrack, but chiefly because



of the location filming. Like James Dean's *East Of Eden*, *Dead & Buried* was shot in Mendocino, an artist colony in California. Robert "Freddy Krueger" Englund (who has a minor role) described filming there as like being "dropped down in a time machine in the '40s".

If the film has one flaw, it's that we're only presented with two plausible candidates for the villain of the piece, so as a whodunnit it's about as satisfying as an episode of *Scooby Doo*. However, the melancholy atmosphere, a squirm-inducing necrophilia subtext and a brilliant final twist more than compensate.

22

PSYCHOMANIA

1972  Director: Don Sharp

Interviewed for BBC Four documentary *Truly, Madly, Cheaply*, star Nicky Henson gleefully dismissed *Psychomania* as "a piece of shit". We respectfully disagree. Sure, this zombie biker flick featuring – of all people – Beryl Reid, isn't exactly *Citizen Kane*, but it is hugely entertaining.

Want to live forever? The way to do so is to commit suicide, but *really* believe you're going to come back from the other side, a secret imparted to biker gang leader Tom (Henson) after a baffling encounter with a giant frog in a mirror. Okay, there's a little more to it than that. His mum (Reid) signed up to a Faustian pact, and a weird frog amulet (which looks like something knocked out by an eight-year-old with a Shaker Maker kit) is also involved, but belief is key. Incidentally, co-star George Sanders committed suicide not long after the film was made, but due to depression following a



Psychomania boasts the poshest biker gang you're ever likely to see.

stroke, not an unsuccessful attempt to achieve eternal life.

After Tom steers his Triumph off a bridge, he returns immortal. Soon the rest of his gang – The Living Dead – are following suit. With his posh BBC English tones, beautifully conditioned hair and spotless leather jacket, Tom isn't exactly your average Hell's Angel, and his gang – who revel in names such as Chopped Meat, Hatchet, Gash and, er, Bertram – are a rum bunch. Initially, their idea of mayhem – driving around the local shops snatching umbrellas out of people's hands – is dreadfully tame. Post-mortem, they progress to

mowing down babies in prams, just for the giggles.

And there are many laughs to be had from *Psychomania* – it's so utterly preposterous! When Tom dies, he's placed in the grave sitting on his bike, with his head poking out. The gang's suicides are outlandish – one dives out of a plane without opening his parachute. And the dialogue will, as Tom might phrase it, "blow your mind". When Tom asks his girlfriend to join him on the other side, she replies, "I promised my mum I'd help her go shopping in the morning".

Psychomania's pleasures aren't all of the camp variety. The opening



title sequence – bikers riding around a mist-shrouded stone circle in slow-mo – is atmospheric, the chase scenes are well-mounted by Don Sharp (who also directed several Hammer films) and John Cameron's score (available from Trunk Records) features some glorious wah-wah-heavy psych-funk.

If you're tickled, check out the other collaboration by screenwriters Arnaud d'Usseau (blacklisted after the McCarthy witch hunts of the '50s) and Julian Zimet: *Horror Express*, in which a defrosted missing link goes on the rampage on a train (and Telly Savalas must try to save the day), is almost as bonkers.

21

[REC]

2007  Directors: Jaume Balagueró & Paco Plaza

This Spanish-language chiller hitches techniques popularised by *The Blair Witch Project* – the “found footage” format, the shaky camerawork, the green nightvision shots – to a tale of nu-zombies (or, if you prefer, the Infected). British indie flick *The Zombie Diaries* (2006) tried something similar, and George Romero also had a pop with 2007’s *Diary Of The Dead*. [REC] is the most effective of the three, because, like *Cloverfield*, it doesn’t try to make philosophical statements, and is careful not to outstay its welcome.

The framing story riffs on 9/11, a documentary in which filmmakers following a Manhattan firefighter found themselves at the epicentre of epoch-making events as the Twin Towers fell. Here, a TV crew also follows firefighters, called to break into an old woman’s apartment. The woman attacks and bites; the building is sealed off by the authorities; the infection spreads; and those trapped inside are left to fight for survival.


The conceit feels authentic, perhaps because there was a great deal of improvisation, with “errors” left uncorrected. As Balagueró explained, “If an actor tripped and fell down the stairs, he would get up and continue, which is what would happen in reality. But we would never cut.” Like the best comedians, the film has an immaculate sense of timing, with all the shock scares perfectly positioned. The final moments acknowledge the debt to its predecessor explicitly – while *Blair Witch* descended into a dark basement, [REC] ascends to a hellish penthouse where the female protagonist unravels into snot-nosed terror just as totally as *Blair Witch*’s Heather. The effect is every bit as blood-freezing.

An English-language remake, *Quarantine*, inevitably followed. Although having a recognisable face like *Dexter*’s Jennifer Carpenter as the lead creates a barrier to total immersion, it’s a perfectly acceptable remount, but unless you’re illiterate there’s absolutely no excuse not to watch the original and read the subs.



20

RETURN OF THE BLIND DEAD

1973  Director: Amando de Ossorio

In this follow-up to 1971’s *Tombs Of The Blind Dead* (see 9), the undead Templar Knights rise from the grave for a second shamle, with their backstory given a reboot. Here, they return as villagers celebrate the 500th anniversary of their victory over the knights. Well, that’s just asking for it, isn’t it?

Amando de Ossorio doesn’t mess with the formula. Several actors return as different characters. There’s another love triangle, between the self-serving Mayor, his fiancée, and her ex Jack Marlowe, a hunk in a John Motson sheepskin who looks more like a catalogue model than the visiting pyrotechnics expert he is. There’s more slow-mo horseback pursuit, and one troubling point is cleared up with the revelation that the knights’ nags are as undead and eyeless as their riders – though that does still leave the question of where they appear from (are there some empty horse-graves somewhere?). Sadly there’s also another unsavoury (and wholly gratuitous) rape scene.

The film proceeds to a *Night Of The Living Dead*-style siege as the survivors hole up in the local church. It’s a daft affair, though, since the Dead (who mostly hack off limbs with their swords rather than biting) simply stand outside waiting for our heroes to flee, which they obligingly do! If they had the good sense to stay put, they’d all survive.

The *Blind Dead* films have been read as a stealth critique on General Franco’s ruling regime, and *Return* provides the strongest evidence for this. The Mayor is a venal authority figure, concerned more with self-preservation than his people’s safety. In one astonishing sequence, he convinces a little girl that her daddy “has cakes for her across the street” to create a diversion as he sneaks away! An eminently hissable panto villain, he’s one of the series’ chief delights.



19

NIGHTMARE CITY

1980  Director: Umberto Lenzi

If you’re the sort of purist zombiephile who doesn’t approve of putting 28 *Days Later* in this list, you’re not going to like the inclusion of this Italian production either. Like Danny Boyle’s *Infected*, the creatures of *Nightmare City* are a) fast-moving and b) not actually dead. As if this weren’t enough, they’re also surprisingly dextrous and cunning, being capable of firing guns, cutting telephone lines and even landing an aeroplane! In our defence, we cite the following points: they have messed-up, deformed faces; are partial to tearing out their victim’s throats; and thanks to “hyper-tissue regeneration”, can only be killed by “bullets damaging the cranium”.

After a radioactive spill at a nuclear plant, an unmarked Hercules military plane makes an unscheduled landing at an airport. What follows is an orgy of violence, as bloodthirsty maniacs rush out clubbing, stabbing and shooting the responding emergency services, passing on the contamination to their victims. Soon it’s spreading all across the city.

Nightmare City is shameless exploitation trash. Director Umberto Lenzi is probably best known for *Cannibal Ferox*, banned in the UK as a video nasty, and he exercises a similar

level of restraint and decorum here. The tone is set early on, when the radioactive maniacs invade a TV studio where leotard-clad dancers are cutting a rug to some saxophone-heavy disco; it’s like watching zombies let loose on a vintage *Top Of The Pops* and proceeding to slaughter Legs & Co. You soon notice that female victims generally have their blouses torn open for the titillation of male viewers, before being stabbed in the chest (one poor dancer actually has part of a breast hacked off). It’s reprehensible filth, of course, and hitting the off button would be a perfectly right-minded liberal response.

And yet... if you did, you’d miss all manner of glorious insanity. The bursts of Ed Wood-style exposition. The bewildering circular ending, which may remind some of one of those Spike Milligan sketches where, in the absence of a punchline, he just shuffled out of the frame. The zombie make-ups, which look as if they’ve been coated in superglue, then had the contents of a Hoover bag emptied over their head. Worst of all, you’d miss the thrilling sequence in which the hero journalist of the piece (played by Hugo Stiglitz, a man with the weary thousand-yard stare of someone who’s lived a dozen lifetimes) escapes from some zombies by running up a rollercoaster, lobbing hand grenades and merrily blazing away with a machine-gun as he goes. Incidentally, if the name Hugo Stiglitz sounds familiar, it’s probably because it was also the name of the Nazi-killing German in Quentin Tarantino’s *Inglourious Basterds*. There’s the final, conclusive proof of *Nightmare City*’s cult status for you: QT adores it.



18

I WALKED WITH A ZOMBIE

1943 Director: Jacques Tourneur

Ignore the silly, sensationalist title forced upon producer Val Lewton's second horror movie for RKO Pictures, as even today *I Walked With A Zombie* stands as one of the eeriest, most understated and downright creepy zombie movies ever made.

Released in the midst of the very real horrors of World War 2, the film was the second collaboration between Lewton and director Jacques Tourneur, following the critical and commercial success of *Cat People*. That film was such a smash, in fact, that (title aside) Lewton was given almost complete creative freedom on *I Walked*, retooling the script as a loose adaptation of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* rather than the American Weekly Magazine article on which it was originally based.

Canadian nurse Betsy (Frances Dee) is hired by plantation owner Paul Holland (Tom Conway) to care for his braindead wife Jessica on the Caribbean island of Saint Sebastian. To complicate matters, Paul's half-brother Wesley Rand (James Ellison) is also in love with Jessica, and blames Paul for her current state. After traditional

medicine fails to cure Jessica, Betsy turns to the island's local voodoo community (has that *ever* been a good idea?) who discover, to their consternation, that Jessica is one of the living dead.

I Walked With A Zombie went unappreciated by the press of the day (the *New York Times* famously describing it as "a dull, disgusting exaggeration of an unhealthy, abnormal concept of life.") but has been recognised as one of RKO and Lewton's most elegant, poetic and atmospheric movies in the years since. It doesn't deal in gore (or many scares, for that matter), but has an unsettling air, as well as one of the most unforgettable scenes in horror movie history, as Betsy stumbles across the towering, bug-eyed creature Carre-Four in a field of canes.

Though simple and efficient as a piece of storytelling (running at a little over 68 minutes), it's sufficiently ambiguous that you could reasonably question whether it qualifies as a zombie movie at all. Local West Indian superstition, the pervasive voodoo rhythms heard across the island and apparent mind control say yes, but there are doubts raised over whether Jessica is actually suffering from tropical fever, and the supernatural explanation for her condition is dubious at best.

The languid pace, monochrome cinematography and theatrical performances typical of the period may all act as a deterrent to modern viewers, but they shouldn't. Even with a title worthy of the dustbin of history, *I Walked With A Zombie* is a classy example of the genre pre- the Romero revolution. **Jordan Farley**



17

THE HOUSE BY THE CEMETERY

1981 Director: Lucio Fulci

Oak Mansion would present a serious challenge for any estate agent. Not only does it echo with strange scrapes and eerie creaks, but it has a most unusual talking point: a tombstone set in the floor. Oh, and an undying psychopath in the cellar.

This film can be summarised as a haunted house story in which the ghost has been replaced by a zombie. A couple and their young son, Bob, move into the titular New England abode. Unbeknownst to them, it was once inhabited by 19th century scientist Dr Freudstein, whose experiments into extending life caused him to be suspended from his profession. And Freudstein (or rather, the maggot-ridden, cannibalistic remnants of him) is still in residence.

As Lucio Fulci films go, *The House By The Cemetery* is about as traditional and explicable it gets – though there are many baffling, surreal details. The house seems to be alive, conspiring with Freudstein to trap his victims via broken floorboards or slamming doors. Sometimes, the cellar's full of hanging corpses and scattered body parts; other times, it's perfectly empty. And in echoes of *The Shining*, young Bob is somehow able to communicate with Mary, a girl from the past whom we see in old photos of the house (incidentally, the constant repetition of the name "Bob" lightens the tone with some unintentional *Blackadder II*-style humour!).

Of course, this being a Fulci film, it's about 50 times more gruesome than *The Amityville Horror*. Amongst the gory highlights that led to it being banned in the UK as a video nasty are a young woman getting stabbed through the head (the blade protruding from her mouth); a vicious attack by a (very fake-looking) giant bat; and an estate agent being brutally stabbed to death with a poker, the latter presented in lingering close-up. Ideal viewing if you've just gone through the trauma of selling your house, then...



GIOVANNI FREZZA

Bob in *The House By The Cemetery*

Can you share some memories of Lucio Fulci from the making of *The House by the Cemetery*?

Lucio Fulci could usually be found screaming at his cast and crew. People were terrified of him. In the morning we hoped he would come on the set with a good attitude, but that was rarely the case! I don't know if he was acting this way to create a tension among us that would show on the screen. He would sometimes be appreciative of you, but a lot of the time he was unpleasant. I even remember crying during the making of it...

Were Catriona MacColl and Paolo Malco, who played your parents in the film, quite protective of you?

Yes, very much! I remember Catriona MacColl being very, very sweet with me. She was loveable, motherly, and also passionate about her acting. Paolo Malco was a nice guy to be around. He was always smiling, trying to take care of me.

How did you feel, especially being so young, when you had to be chased by the film's horrific zombie, Dr Freudstein?

It wasn't so bad, probably because I got to see the character getting created, being made up layer by layer – the mask, the make-up, the arms, the latex... everything. I was so exposed to it that it didn't scare me – instead it was very funny.

How did your own mother and father feel about you acting in a film like this?

They didn't really think about it because I got involved in acting quite accidentally. I was discovered by an agent while walking around Rome with my family. After that, I made some commercials, and that led to *The House By The Cemetery*.

My parents' attitude was always "this is fine" – they saw it as a bit of fun. However, after *The House By The Cemetery* I became the most requested child actor in Italy, and my mother said it would be better if I thought about another career. She wanted me to go to college and study hard; she discouraged me quite a lot because she knew it was a very difficult business. Today I work in marketing and live in Chicago, so it's a very different life!

Calum Waddell



16

28 DAYS LATER

2002 Director: Danny Boyle

Before you say anything, yes, we know *28 Days Later*'s rage-infected fiends aren't *technically* zombies. They don't eat brains, they're running about like ADD-addled kids on a diet of pixie sticks – and they're not even dead. But the film's importance in kick-starting the latest wave of zombie movies (including Romero's return), and its ground-up reinvention of the genre, make it a work we would be foolish to ignore.

In what seems like a nod to *The Day Of The Triffids* (although the filmmakers protest ignorance of Wyndham's opening), it begins with bicycle courier Jim (Cillian Murphy) waking from a coma in an abandoned hospital. Stumbling around the streets of an ominously empty London, it isn't long before Jim learns that it's best to steer clear of red-eyed psychopaths, and is rescued by several survivors. A radio broadcast claiming to know the "answer to infection" prompts them to make the risky journey to an army blockade near Manchester, where they find evidence that the world doesn't need a virus to bring out the worst in humanity.

Shot on harsh, kinetic digital video, with a story that has tough messages about human nature, *28 Days Later* is a physically draining and emotionally punishing experience. In the past, the greatest threat zombies presented had generally been their overwhelming numbers. Not so here: just one rage victim is enough to ensure instant bowel evacuation. Controversial, perhaps, but one truer to the way zombies have continually evolved to reflect societal concerns throughout the history of zombie cinema. In the early 20th century it was fear of outsiders and their strange rituals. George Romero's jackpot idea was to capitalise on nuclear paranoia. Boyle's film touches on a contemporary terror – viral outbreak and contagion being very real concerns in the early 21st century.

It's also a social commentary, in a way that arguably Romero's films no longer are, with the rage virus an on-the-nose metaphor for the contemporary phenomenon of social rage (road, air, iPhone autocorrect, you name it). In spirit, it's a movie that's more worthy of the *Dead* title than any of Romero's own post-*Day* sequels.

Innovatively shot, with phenomenal performances and an uncompromising script, *28 Days Later* is a blistering piece of horror cinema. In its wake, a raft of movies have followed featuring sprinty zombies, all of which owe a significant debt to this film. It might not feature the undead, but *28 Days Later* is the most important zombie movie of the 21st century. **Jordan Farley**



15

DELLAMORTE DELLAMORE

1994 Director: Michele Soavi

The only way to make sense of this freewheeling black comedy-cum-gothic romance (released on DVD as *Cemetery Man*) is to approach much of it as a strange dream. Trouble is, it's difficult to identify when protagonist Francesco Dellamore (a wonderfully out-of-place Rupert Everett) falls asleep (or enters a waking nightmare). It may happen after he's bitten by a zombie, but perhaps he slips into madness earlier. Or maybe it *all* unfolds in his head.

One thing's certain: no other film features a character who's quite so blasé about the business of offing the undead. Laconic slacker Dellamore is the caretaker in a cemetery where (for reasons never explained) the dead return on the seventh night after their death. When they do, Dellamore dispatches them with practiced ease, at one point pausing briefly mid-phone call to blast one in the head, before continuing with his casual chat.

The film ticks so many boxes. It has scenes of eroticism, as Dellamore and a widow (the stunningly beautiful Anna Falchi) make love on her husband's tombstone; quotable lines ("The only thing that's not shitty is sleep") – many of which occur during Everett's narration, sleepily mumbled as if he's just been pitched out of bed; and some amusingly quirky zombies (at one point we see a zombie boy scout who's furiously rubbing a stick in his palms!). Soavi's compositions are imaginative, with shots framed, for example, through the pages of a burning book and from inside the mouth of a flying decapitated head!

Explaining the plot is quite impossible; the script was based on a tale by Italian *fumetti* writer Tiziano Sclavi, but often feels like it was composed by many hands using the exquisite corpse method. The only thing you really need to know is that every baffling moment of it is utterly fascinating.



SERGIO STIVALETTI

Make-up artist on *Dellamorte Dellamore*

How did you become involved?

I had worked with the director Michele Soavi on two other films: *The Church* and *The Sect*. We had also worked together on movies such as *Demons* – where he was the assistant director – so we were quite good friends by that time. It also represented a step away from Dario Argento, who had produced Michele's previous two movies. So I think having me do the special effects at least provided one reassuring and trustworthy face!

What were your influences when it came to creating the zombies?

I'm a big fan of Tom Savini and I enjoyed his book *Grande Illusions*, where he revealed how he created the zombies of *Dawn Of The Dead*. So I took some inspiration from him, but perhaps because we are European, our overall influences in that film were different. I think that the zombies are a little unique.

They are not the same as the Romero or Fulci zombies, and that was my goal: to create a new design.

There have been rumours about a sequel – is it likely to happen?

I know Michele would like to do it and I would, of course, love to work on it. But I don't know for sure because it's very hard to make horror films in Italy just now. I don't know exactly why this happened, but most people seem to think that it's because Italian TV companies do not want to invest any money into the genre. In Italy there are still a lot of fans of horror, but the films are just not there any more.

The film represents the end of an era: after it, horror films from Italy were few and far between and relied more on digital trickery.

Yes, this is true, and I found myself working with digital effects on stuff like Dario Argento's *The Phantom Of The Opera*, which came only shortly after *Dellamorte Dellamore*.

The big problem was that *Dellamorte Dellamore* was not a big success when it was released, and by that time there hadn't been a huge Italian horror hit for years. I wonder if that discouraged a lot of potential producers...

Calum Waddell

14

NIGHT OF THE CREEPS

1986  Director: Fred Dekker

Why the hell this film isn't more critically lauded is a mystery. It didn't hit DVD until 2010, and over here in the UK we're still waiting for a region two release. It's a crying shame, because *Night Of The Creeps* delivers everything you could want from an '80s horror-comedy.

Writer/director Fred Dekker (who went to create another cult favourite, 1987's *The Monster Squad*) weds a tribute to the SF and horror films he watched as a kid to the teen movies typical of his contemporary John Hughes. The film kicks off with a black-and-white prologue set in the '50s, riffing on *The Blob* and its ilk as an alien capsule falls to Earth. It then jumps forward to the present day, unleashing parasitic slugs that leap into their victims' mouths and lay eggs in their brains into a world of



Bringing a whole new meaning to the term "face off".

rolled-up sleeves and sorority house pranks. As if *The Blob* meets *The Puppet Masters* meets John Hughes wasn't enough, elements of slasher flicks and alien invasion movies are also added to the mix.

It's a very knowing, self-aware film – the local university is named after B-movie king Roger Corman, and characters have surnames such as Romero, Cronenberg and Carpenter; dialogue such as, "What is this, a homicide or a bad B-movie?" makes an appearance, and at one point an old lady is seen watching *Plan 9 From Outer Space* on TV.

It's also utterly charming. That's largely down to the central pairing of lovesick moper Chris (Jason Lively, perhaps best known for his role as Chevy Chase's son in *National Lampoon's European Vacation*) and JC, his wisecracking buddy – and how often do you see a movie in which the heroes are a ginger dork and a guy who needs crutches to get around? But the show is stolen by Tom Atkins as Ray Cameron, a hard-boiled, whisky-glugging police detective who begins practically every conversation by laconically spitting the catchphrase, "Thrill me!"



The climax, in which Chris and friends take on a coachload of tuxedoed zombie frat boys and a swarm of alien slugs armed with a flamethrower and a hovermower (Dekker beat Peter Jackson to the punch on that front) is an absolute hoot. True, some of the effects (such as a zombified dog) look a tad shonky nowadays, but since that just provides more amusement, it's all gravy. The '80s was the high point of the horror comedy. Goofy and cartoonish, with a punk rock edge and plenty of heart, *Night Of The Creeps* is one of the very best examples of its kind.

13

WILD ZERO

2000  Director: Tetsuro Takeuchi

Watching this Japanese alien-invasion zombie B-movie, you worry that everyone involved may have been sniffing on bags of UHU. It's a work of insane genius. It's the sort of film that makes you want to down a bottle of neat vodka, throw your television out of the window, set your house on fire, and pogo naked on the roof screaming "ROCK AND ROLL!!!!". It should probably be banned as a menace to public order.

Shot in Thailand (with Thai soldiers and their families serving as zombie extras), it stars Guitar Wolf, lead singer of a cult Japanese garage rock band of the same name, and possibly the coolest man on Earth. Decked out in head-to-toe black leather and wraparound shades, guitar constantly slung over one shoulder, he wanders around dispensing nuggets of wisdom like "Rock'n'roll has no boundaries,



Guitar Wolf – a man far too cool to be troubled by zombies, or by a lack of plot.

nationalities or genders!" before screeching off on his customised motorbike, which makes more noise than your average Boeing 737.

The story? A swarm of flying saucers is heading to Earth. Simultaneously, zombies start roaming the streets. Presumably these two events are connected, but quite how (or why) is never spelled out. Our guess is that the aliens got stoned the night before, watched *Plan 9 From Outer Space* and thought "hey, cool plan!". Among the freaks getting caught up in the ensuing chaos are the band; their deranged former

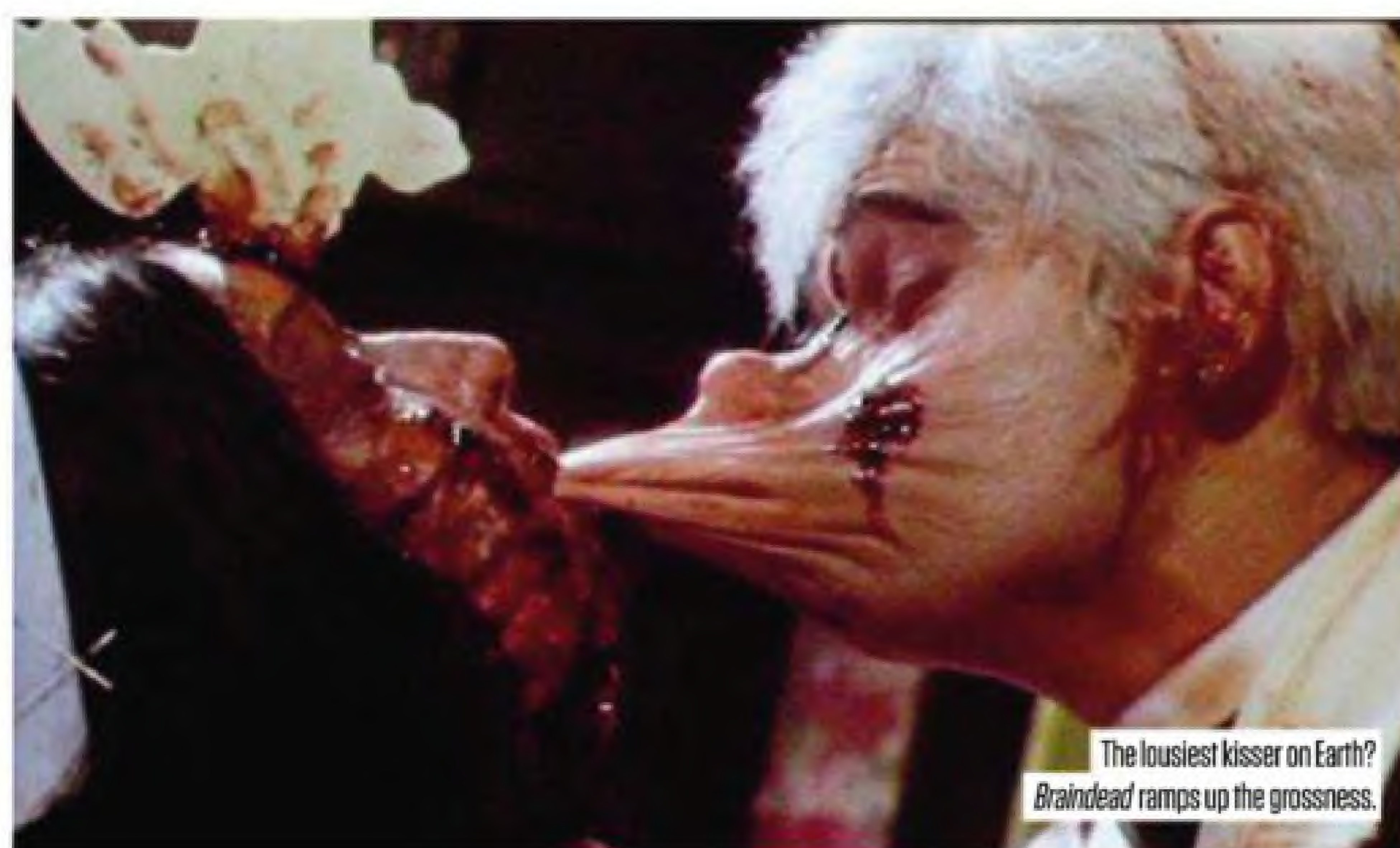
manager, resplendent in crotch-crushing hot pants; an Amazonian arms dealer; Ace, a wide-eyed rocker who is Guitar Wolf's number one fan; and Tobio, the "dream girl" he meets along the way. Who is actually a bloke. We think.

The plot is wafer-thin, and one suspects the script was written in crayon by someone recently lobotomised – but these factors are unimportant. The outrageously over-the-top setpieces make it all worthwhile. Typically these involve Guitar Wolf hollering "ROCK AND ROLL!!!!" before slaughtering zombies



by, say, hurling guitar picks at them like they are shuriken, while his two sidekicks (Bass Wolf and, er, Drum Wolf) nonchalantly comb their monstrous rockabilly quiffs.

Howling with guitar feedback, reeking of Brylcreem, and dripping with putrid fragments of zombie brain, *Wild Zero* is heroically dumb – but also sweetly good-natured, with a skewed romanticism. Essential viewing for Ramones fans, lovers of drive-in trash, and anyone who worries that they have far too many brain cells and would like to swiftly eradicate a few billion.



12

BRAINDEAD

1992 🇺🇸 Director: Peter Jackson

It would probably come as a shock to the majority of multiplex-flocking *Lord Of The Rings* fans that almost two decades ago Peter Jackson made the goriest zombie film ever. And *Braindead* has retained its ability to make you gasp and hoot at ever-decreasing intervals.

At heart, it's very much a heightened, farcical comedy which owes as much to *Fawlty Towers* and *Monty Python* as it does Sam Raimi's *The Evil Dead* or George Romero's apocalyptic tales. *Braindead*'s actors are never happier than when widening their eyeholes to the size of saucers and attempting to devour the scenery. Sometimes literally.

Lionel Cosgrove is an Oedipal man-child who struggles to escape his mother's overbearing shadow after meeting the lovely Paquita. If it hadn't been for a prologue involving bodily dismemberment – and in fairness, the film's title, which became *Dead Alive* in America, probably to avoid confusion with the 1990 Bill Pullman horror *Brain Dead* – you'd be forgiven for expecting this to be a sappy love story. Then Mum gets bitten by a

Sumatran rat-monkey at the zoo and slowly turns into a ravenous zombie. As the virus spreads, *Braindead* distinguishes itself from other films of its ilk by having Lionel attempt to keep the (un)dead firmly under wraps, calling to mind one of Basil Fawlty's finest hours.

Admittedly the self-consciously corny humour drops the ball from time to time, but this is certainly not the case when it comes to the bloodshed. *Braindead*'s over-the-top violence is jaw-dropping. The often brilliant prosthetics are a sobering reminder of the value of puppetry over pixels. Jackson occasionally employs the jolting technique of switching from a real person to a blood-spurting dummy in the blink of a frame. The director and his cast are revelling in the red stuff; while this was a low-budget movie, everyone involved was clearly willing to go the extra mile. The indelible images come thick and fast: a zombie's head lit from within by a light bulb, a head in a blender, a zombie baby bursting out of someone's face... and most unforgettably, a massacre scene involving one man, hordes of zombies and a lawnmower.

Braindead is so much fun it should be illegal – and indeed, in some countries (such as Germany) the uncut version still is. It was pleasing to find that, come 2005, Jackson hadn't begun to regard his creation as a dirty secret: at one point during *King Kong*, in the Venture's cargo hold, we spot a container labelled "Sumatran Rat Monkey". **Jason Arnopp**



11

DAY OF THE DEAD

1985 🇺🇸 Director: George Romero

This may be George Romero's favourite of his original *Dead* trilogy, but it's not that of many Romero fans. It's easy to see why: *Dawn Of The Dead* had moments of jollity and triumph (let's go shopping!), but *Day* is an unremitting downer.

A small group of scientists, soldiers and civilians are holed up in an underground base. All are stir-crazy and exhausted; many are cracking under the pressure. As their different viewpoints clash, there's endless bickering. Meetings descend into obscenity-littered shouting matches, then threats to kill. Humanity, stripped of social restraints, is far more terrifying than the zombies.

Joe Pilato is almost *too* good as the bad guy, unblinking fascist Captain Rhodes (literally unblinking – Pilato could be a world champion starrer). It's not pleasant spending time in his company; if you found yourself in a pub with this guy, you'd scarper for fear of an arbitrary glassing.

The one light spot is Bub, a smarter-than-average zombie whom maniacal scientist Dr Logan is trying to domesticate; his innocent reactions to, say, being played Beethoven's Ode To Joy are priceless. It's an impressive piece of physical acting by Howard Sherman. The film also features some of effects maestro Tom Savini's best work – all manner of horribly gruesome amputation, eye gouging and intestine ripping (although it's a shame some of the zombies sport Dick Emery-style buck teeth...)

But the unrelenting nihilism can be a little too much to bear; the only relief comes from playing Spot The Novelty Zombie with undead majorettes and ballerinas. Racial epithets are thrown around, and the threat of rape hangs in the air. That's believable – if the zombie apocalypse happened, it would play out more like this than *Zombieland*.

But it also makes *Day* a film you need to live with and get accustomed to before you can fully appreciate its many fine qualities.



JOE PILATO

Captain Rhodes in *Day Of The Dead*

George Romero originally had a far bigger concept for the film but couldn't get the necessary funding. Did he seem disappointed?

Not at all – in fact, myself and the other cast members had no idea that *Day Of The Dead* was originally going to be this big-budget epic. George is an extraordinary director – he knows what he wants, and he's an actor's dream. Many filmmakers are very technically minded – they just want you to hit your marks and then they move onto the next scene.

But George lets you try things out and if he likes your ideas he'll let you incorporate them into the film. We got up at four every morning to do *Day Of The Dead* and George was always the first person on the set. He was always smiling too – he's just such a great guy.

Was it fun to play such an unpleasant character?

Absolutely! Villains always have the upper hand and actors love playing them. George gave Rhodes a strong point of view that was fairly easy to bring to life. My approach was that, once upon a time, he'd probably been a real prick of a military man... but by the time he'd got to the cave, and the zombies had started spreading, he'd just lost it! I think he began to enjoy being dominant and would have shot anyone disagreeing with him early on, given the chance.

When the film came out did people cross the street to avoid you?

Once or twice! Most female horror fans are still scared to ask for my autograph, but once they get to know me they see I'm nothing like Rhodes. I get a lot of police officers and military men coming up to me at conventions. One cop told me that my picture was hanging in their squad house! I hope they just like the movie and don't base any of their behaviour on Captain Rhodes!

What do you remember most about Rhodes being pulled apart?

Just the smell. I was unsure how Tom Savini and Greg Nicotero were going to do that scene – and then I was told they were using pig guts. My first thought was, "Where are they going to get the pig guts from?" My ex-wife was very happy when she saw that sequence!

Calum Waddell

10

DEATHDREAM

1974  Director: Bob Clark

Zombie filmmakers don't have much in the way of respectable literary forebears. Tellers of ghost stories can invoke MR James, and directors of vampire flicks can claim a lineage back to Bram Stoker. The nearest the zombie genre comes is WW Jacobs's 1902 short story "The Monkey's Paw", in which a grief-crazed mother uses the titular talisman to wish her son back to life; he turns up at her door, but in a horribly rotted state.

Deathdream takes this classic tale and yokes it to the Vietnam War, like a supernaturally themed cousin of *Coming Home*.

The mother of Andy Brooks greets the telegram about her son's death in combat with anguished denial, muttering the words, "You will come back." Sure enough, he does... but as a tightly wound ball of trauma with a blazing thousand-yard stare. Uncommunicative and impassive,



Richard Backus brings home the horror of war – and then some – in *Deathdream*.

with a murderous need for blood, Andy's seen things that his parents could never understand, and will – like thousands of veterans – never be the same again...

The use of the zombie as a metaphor for post-traumatic shock and the familial disintegration that can follow in its wake is highly effective, but despite its socially-conscious approach, *Deathdream* isn't an overly worthy film. Thanks to Richard Backus, who gives Andy a laser-eyed intensity and the smile of a sadistic dentist, it's seriously chilling too. A sequence where he lies in wait for the

family doctor and stabs him to death (like George Romero's young vamp, Martin, Andy has an affinity for syringes), is almost painfully suspenseful. Carl Zittler's score is appealingly leftfield too: half of it sounds like someone making noises with their mouth; the rest brings to mind a man frantically trying to escape from the inside of a piano.

Director Bob Clark and writer Alan Ormsby previously collaborated on 1973's *Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things* (see 35). *Deathdream* is a more serious-minded piece of work, but shares some of its predecessor's



quirkiness. Oddball secondary characters – like a barman who's disgusted by the word "nuptials", and a postman who blathers on about a dog puking on his sweater – provide humorous respite from the grim reality of Andy's condition.

Three decades later, Joe Dante drew from the same well with "Homecoming", an episode of the *Masters Of Horror* series in which, once again, undead soldiers return from a distant war people would prefer to forget (this time Iraq). That's a first-rate piece of TV drama – but *Deathdream* is better.

9

TOMBS OF THE BLIND DEAD

1971  Director: Amando de Ossorio

Over the course of four films, Amando de Ossorio's *Blind Dead* established themselves as Spain's most significant contribution to the zombie genre – despite making Romero's trundling ghouls look like Usain Bolt.

These former Knights Templar took part in satanic rituals, supping the blood of virgins to achieve eternal life. Strung up for their crimes, they had their eyes pecked out by crows. Now their desiccated, sword-wielding cadavers – which, in their soil-encrusted cowls, resemble the Grim Reaper after a particularly wet Glastonbury weekend – shuffle along with almost infinite slowness, using sound alone to hunt those foolish enough to visit the deserted ruins of their medieval village. In a unique twist, they also pursue their prey on horseback. These sequences, which



Lie back and think of undead knights: de Ossorio's *Blind Dead* blends horror and sex.

play out in slow-mo, are wonderfully eerie – if you can push the distracting question of where the horses came from to the back of your mind...

Tombs was made at the fag-end of Franco's authoritarian rule. Some readings present it as a slyly subversive text, with the Templars representing the ruling regime – but one suspects this might be rather over-interpreting matters. The film was a product of a time when audiences across the continent were demanding horror spiced with both sex and violence, and Ossorio duly obliges (although thanks to the conservative Spanish censors, his countrymen wouldn't have seen

much of it at the time). Sometimes the results amuse, particularly a flashback to some schoolgirl lesbianism: since the character having the flashback is on a train, hands stray to a soundtrack of steam engine chuffing, as smoke drifts through the bedroom; you half expect an inspector to walk in and punch their tickets. Other scenes are decidedly *not* amusing: late on, one Latin stud decides to "cure" a lesbian character by forcing himself on her. He soon gets his comeuppance, but the sequence has no good reason to exist.

Still, there's so much to admire about this film (especially considering it was shot in four or five weeks with



meagre resources), that even that discomforting sequence can't ruin it. There are some magnificently atmospheric setpieces, chief among them one in which a zombie wanders a workshop full of mannequins, lit by a flashing red light (it's explained, hilariously, that there's a neon light workshop upstairs!). The sound design also deserves special mention: every smallest noise is ominously amplified, from the ghastly rumbling of the earth as the knights rise from their graves, to the echoing footfalls of those spectral horses – whoever was in charge of bashing the coconuts deserves some sort of gong.

08

DAWN OF THE DEAD

2004  Director: Zack Snyder

The indications weren't promising: another lazy, pointless remake, directed by some wet-behind-the-ears commercials director (Zack Snyder), scripted by the genius behind *Scooby-Doo* (James Gunn). But against the odds, this "re-envisioning" of George Romero's '79 classic turned out to be exhilarating, gripping, and laugh-out-loud funny – and is arguably a movie on a par with the original.

The basic set-up remains the same, with a group of disparate characters holing up in a shopping mall to escape a zombie apocalypse. Key lines of dialogue are sampled, and there are cameos by stars-of-the-original Ken Foree, Scott Reiniger and Tom Savini (as well as a clothes store named Gaylen Ross), but otherwise the new *Dawn* goes its own way, with remarkable wit, style and invention.



Conclusive proof that being undead and feasting on corpses is an unhealthy lifestyle.

The devastating prologue shows the zombie outbreak enveloping a sleepy corner of suburbia. Within moments, nurse Ana's husband and daughter are trying to bite chunks out of her, houses are burning, and cars are crashing and exploding as people flee for their lives. It's a jaw-dropping five minutes of one woman's hell on Earth. From here on in, *Dawn* never loses sight of the fact that this national disaster is an accumulation of thousands upon thousands of individual tragedies.

Unlike *Resident Evil* (neutered by aiming for a 15 certificate), *Dawn*

features all the exploding heads and chainsaw carnage a gorehound could wish for, utilising CGIed oceans of extras and huge explosions that were way beyond the meagre budget. The action scenes are impressively tense, and the fact that these zombies can *sprint* helps to amp up the sense of urgency and prevents them becoming mere figures of fun. The film's mordant sense of humour also really impresses. It's stuffed with quotable lines, many of which fall from the mouth of self-serving cynic Steve – it's like having a more embittered version of Chandler from *Friends* stranded in a horror flick.



If we have one criticism, it's that the retooled *Dawn* mutes the satirical attack on consumer culture of Romero's original. But, to be honest, that film's political depth has been exaggerated over the years, so this isn't as great a loss as some naysayers make out. A textbook example of why sometimes – just occasionally – remakes are a good idea, Zack Snyder's *Dawn Of The Dead* deserves to be bracketed with the likes of David Cronenberg's *The Fly* and John Carpenter's *The Thing*. Like both those films, it'll still be fondly remembered several decades from now.

07

MESSIAH OF EVIL

1971  Directors: Willard Huyck and Gloria Katz

This ambiguous, dreamlike piece is what you get when people with an underground sensibility make a drive-in flick. It was written by husband-and-wife team Willard

Huyck and Gloria Katz, who scripted *American Graffiti* and *The Temple Of Doom* for George Lucas. Other talents involved include cinematographer Stephen Katz (Gloria's brother) who later worked on films like *Gods & Monsters*, and future director Walter Hill, who cameos in the prologue as the lucky recipient of a throat-slashing from a young girl.

Arletty (Marianna Hill, whom *Star Trek* fans will know from her role in "Dagger Of The Mind") visits the coastal town of Point Dune, California in search of her estranged father, an artist. He's vanished without trace, and his diary discusses strange visions and

some "unspeakable evil" at work. Staying in his studio (whose walls are covered with sinister murals of watching figures), Arletty investigates the mystery with the assistance of three urbane out-of-towners: aristocratic "collector of legends" Thom (Michael Greer, at that time best known as a female impersonator) and his two women companions.

What's happening to the townsfolk is unclear – are they zombies, possessed, or bewitched? A wino babbles of the "blood moon"; robed figures light fires out on the rocks; local legend tells of a "dark stranger" who visited a century ago

and promised to return. Those affected bleed from the eyes, are impervious to pain, and are prone to puking up maggots, as Arletty eventually discovers for herself...

It's a horror film with a self-consciously artistic air, not afraid of homaging Jean-Luc Godard or pronouncing portentous dialogue (at one point Arletty speaks of, "each of us dying slowly in the prisons of our minds"). Languid pacing and a whiff of pretension will deter some viewers, but even they'll admit that the zombie attack sequences are well-staged.

In one, we discover a group of locals clustered around the butcher's counter of the supermarket, tucking into raw meat. Another unfolds in a cinema, as a woman watches a hokey Western. As the seats behind her slowly fill up with ghouls (with echoes of *The Birds*), it's phenomenally tense. When the reel spins to a close, she gets taken down in front of a blank white screen.

The film had a troubled birth: the workprint was taken out of Huyck and Katz's hands after investors sued the producers, then recut and scored by other hands. Luckily, they didn't completely wreck it. Supremely atmospheric and brimming with surreal imagery, it's a largely forgotten horror classic that we urge you to hunt down.



Makes a nice change from human flesh... it's feeding time in *Messiah Of Evil*.



06

THE LIVING DEAD AT THE MANCHESTER MORGUE

1974  Director: Jorge Grau

Much of the pleasure of this film (also known as *Let Sleeping Corpses Lie*) comes from seeing the undead wandering around the grey landscape of '70s Britain – all *Joy Of Sex* beards, cardigans and Minis – as if they've accidentally lurched into an early Mike Leigh film.

As those classic zombie attack scenes are restaged in NHS hospitals and country churches, you can't help feeling a surge of patriotic pride. How can you resist a zombie flick where the central characters are called George and Edna, and the first response to a zombie killing is to give the widow a cuppa and some bourbons? Funny, then, that this



Blood, beards and bourbon biscuits abound in this very British zombie film.

quintessentially British film is actually an Italian/Spanish co-production, shot by a Spanish director.

For once, the cause of the outbreak is clear: an experimental machine being tested by the Department of Agriculture, which uses ultrasound to kill insects and parasites (despite the title, the bulk of the film takes place in the Lake District – and was shot in the Peak District!).

These zombies are fast-moving and strong. Director Jorge Grau recorded their groans himself, drawing on the memory of the day his father died: when Grau senior's body was moved from a sitting position to

lying down, a wheeze of dead man's breath came out...

It's clearly a cheap film: there are never more than three zombies on screen at once, and their make-up basically consists of red contact lenses and white face paint. But it's well-paced, imaginatively shot, and features some convincingly nasty gore. This led to it being included on the list of video nasties, although it's rumoured that some of the film's initial seizures were driven as much by its portrayal of the police as inept and bigoted.

The characterisation is sublime. The hero is a sort of camp Mancunian Robin Askwith (the script is peppered



with lines like "Don't get yer knickers in a twist!"), while Arthur Kennedy is perfect as a police inspector with a chip on his shoulder about hippy types with "long hair and faggot clothes".

For Brits, the reason the film was set in the UK is amusing. According to director Grau, "The producer felt that a horror film set in Rome or Madrid wouldn't have the same commercial appeal. To him, Manchester seemed a distant, mysterious place – even the name." Maybe it took a bunch of outsiders who found four-day-week-era Britain *exotic* to make it into such a successful movie location.

05

THE RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD

1985  Director: Dan O'Bannon

Featuring a stripping punkette, reanimated butterflies and the phrase "rabid weasels", *The Return Of The Living Dead* is light years from its illustrious forebear, *Night Of The Living Dead*. But even though it radically rewrites the rules, both in terms of tone and the basic "facts" about zombies, it's not a film that besmirches Romero's legacy – it simply strikes out in a completely different direction.

The project began as a script by *Night Of The Living Dead* co-writer John Russo, but ended up, in the hands of *Alien* co-writer Dan O'Bannon, as something completely different: an overtly humorous, often slapstick take on zombies. (For more on this, see pages 84 and 96.)

We're told that *Night Of The Living Dead* was inspired by a



The Tarman has become a real fan-favourite zombie from the movie.

real-life incident, caused by a spillage of 245 Trioxin, an experimental US military chemical. After a mislaid barrel leaks Trioxin gas, the staff of a medical supply warehouse, their mortician neighbour and a gang of partying punks are caught up in a fresh outbreak.

O'Bannon's film showed (along with *Nightmare City* – see 18) that the undead can be fast-moving without diluting their menace (even more radically, destroying the brain doesn't work, and the zombies can both reason and speak). It popularised the notion that they love to feast on brains, and also proved that flesh-

eating zombies can be a suitable subject for humour.

Then there's Linnea Quigley. Nude flesh wasn't new to the genre – there's a naked ghoul in *Night Of The Living Dead*. But when Quigley's death-obsessed punkette Trash disrobed, gyrating on a tomb to the strains of hair metal, it provided countless pimply gorehounds with their sexual awakening – and the actress with an enduring career as a scream queen, one with some amusing turns (search YouTube for "Linnea Quigley's Horror Workout").

This is a film studded with moments of delicious jet-black



comedy: our heroes have to contend with reanimated half-dogs (for use in veterinary schools) and bin bags full of wriggling body parts, and after paramedics are ambushed by zombies, one of the undead picks up the ambulance radio and requests, "Send more paramedics!"

But it isn't just a goofy chuckle-fest. When a rotted half-corpse explains her hunger for brains – eating them numbs the terrible pain of being dead – it's surprisingly touching. Add harrowing transformations for likeable characters and a none-more-bleak ending and you have a zom-com that's a flavoursome blend of sweet and sour.

04

SHAUN OF THE DEAD

2004  Director: Edgar Wright

Sometimes, you have to leave home to get the respect you deserve. George Romero was delighted with this comedic riff on his *Dead* films. Tarantino recently listed it as one of the best 20 films of the last 17 years. Back here in Blighty though, *Shaun Of The Dead* is loved but not lionised to the same extent. Maybe it's because we don't like our countrymen to get too full of themselves. Whatever – it deserves more effusive praise.

The cleverness of the script only fully makes itself known over time. And we're not just talking about the fanboy-pleasing references to, say, director Lucio Fulci or *Dawn Of The Dead*'s Ken Foree, delightful though they are to spot.

Shaun Of The Dead is a film that's crammed with premonitions and echoes, both visual and verbal. Some are extremely subtle, such as an early line of dialogue that synopsis what's to follow: "A Bloody Mary... A bite... Back at the bar for shots." Sure enough, our heroes find a zombie called Mary in their garden, people get bitten and they end up fighting off the undead hordes with a shotgun. This kind of thing ensures that *Shaun* gets even better on repeat viewings.

It's a hilarious film, but is sometimes harrowing too, particularly when our hero is faced with having to blow his mother's brains out. This ability to deliver an emotional gut-punch lifts it above the zom-coms that came in its wake. As one of those middle-class mums who "doesn't like to make a fuss", Penelope Wilton almost steals the film. But Simon Pegg doesn't get enough credit for his acting chops.

If we have one tiny criticism, it's that the "rom" part of this movie's rom-zom-com formula falls short. Effectively given the straight man role, Kate Ashfield struggles to make us love Liz the way that Shaun does. And why doesn't he get to kiss the girl at the end, for chrissake?



An example of how wrong contact lenses can go.

03

THE BEYOND

1981  Director: Lucio Fulci

As former nasties are recuperated into the canon, many '80s horrors are now being dubbed "oneiric" by modern-day critics. This one – Italian director Lucio Fulci's finest work – is the most deserving of such a pretentious label.

Incoherent to the point of disintegration, it's a frustratingly difficult film to explain to others. After the credits have rolled, your mental grasp on it starts to slip away, like a fading dream. For Fulci fans, that's key to the appeal. Others will share star Catriona MacColl's initial appraisal of the script: outrageous gore strung together by a bunch of nonsense...

MacColl plays Liza Merrill, who's renovating a New Orleans hotel that she's inherited from her uncle. Unbeknown to her – and posing a serious threat to her chances of winning a star rating – it's built on a gateway to Hell. What follows is best summarised like this: weird shit happens. This mostly involves atrocities committed to the human body, filmed in loving close-up. One woman has her face melted off by

acid; the resulting gloop oozes across a morgue floor towards her fear-frozen daughter's feet, like a malevolent wave of strawberry yoghurt. Another unfortunate has her head jammed onto a rusty nail so hard that an eyeball pops out with the force of a Thai sex worker demonstrating her dexterity with a ping-pong ball.

In the standout moment of insanity, an unfortunate chap has his faced nibbled off by a scuttle of killer tarantulas (well, several tarantulas and one joke shop wind-up spider). Why? We have no idea. By the time zombies emerge en masse (to make the film more appealing to German distributors – there were none in Fulci's original outline), lumbering around the corridors of the local hospital, a simple outbreak of the undead seems pretty unremarkable.

A friendly doctor (David Warbeck, a male lead so wonderfully of his time that you can practically smell the Brut) strives without success to provide rational explanations. It's all utterly incomprehensible, and breathtakingly so. That's especially true in the latter stages, when Fulci gleefully discards any last vestige of logic, mapping geographically distant locations on to one another and marooning his leads in a marrow-freezing Hellscape that would, were you dreaming it, jerk you bolt upright in bed. All this makes *The Beyond* as close as you can come to having a very unpleasant nightmare while staying fully conscious.



Fulci's zombies: always on the look-out for a lost pound coin.



CATRIONA MACCOLL

Liza Merrill in *The Beyond*

How did a nice girl like you get involved in Italian horror?

That's a good question! I had actually never seen a horror movie in my life. I wasn't into that sort of thing, and probably wouldn't have done them either. However, what reassured me was that the Italian film industry revered Lucio Fulci, even though the critics did not. I think that's part of why he was able to assemble so many great Italian technicians and actors for his horror films. After I'd done *The Beyond* I was taken on by the then-top Italian agency for actors. So these films were having a major impact in Europe, even if they were being banned as "video nasties" in the UK.

What's the secret to a really good scream?

I just let it all hang out! When I'm faced with a challenge, I like to do it whole-heartedly, and I quickly realised that I was a very good screamer. There's actually something liberating about screaming. I can understand why it's a technique in therapy!

What was Lucio Fulci like?

He was enigmatic and complicated, let me put it that way! We had a warm relationship of sorts – he wasn't a very emotional man, but there was a mutual respect between us. I knew that he really liked me, even if he never expressed it that often, and we shared a rather dark sense of humour. But nobody ever got to know Lucio. He didn't have a lot of people who were close to him.

You did three films with him – why didn't you do a fourth?

Lucio did ask me to make a fourth one, but it was *The New York Ripper*.

I think I was quite fortunate in saying no, because I've been told that film wasn't as good as the ones we'd done previously. However, I didn't even read the script when it came to me – by that time, I was trying to do something else. I felt that I had screamed myself out. I didn't really set out to become a cult movie queen, but I have become that anyway, which is rather ironic!

Calum Waddell

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02

NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD

1968 🇺🇸 Director: George Romero

What more is there to say about the daddy of modern zombie movies? Thousands of words have been written about its low-budget ingenuity, its forward-thinking casting, the socio-political subtexts that fester beneath the surface, and its influence on the filmmakers of today. And rightly so. But those essays often skip over one thing – arguably the most important factor in the film's success: it's a very scary movie.

Take the famous opening scene. A brother and sister leave flowers on a grave. Johnny is pissing about; dismissive. Barbra is more sensitive. He cracks some lame jokes and they bicker. And then a man wanders into shot. He's in the

background, innocuous – until he attacks! It's a shocking moment precisely because Johnny has just made a gag about the possibility of this very occurrence. Our good-looking male lead has his skull smashed on a gravestone less than ten minutes into the movie.

The rest of *Night* is for the most part a humour-free zone, thick with the real-world paranoia of nuclear attack. The apocalypse survivors hide in a cellar, their only contact with the outside world coming in the form of news footage and doomy warnings to head for survival shelters. They – and we – know nothing of what's going on. If the film hadn't been called *Night Of The Living Dead* (and it nearly wasn't – alternative titles considered include *Night Of The Flesh Eaters* and *Night Of Anubis*), we wouldn't have known what these marauding "ghouls" actually were until two-thirds of the way in.

Of course, there's a straightforward reason for this low-key approach. The film was made for a pittance, costing just \$114,000. Romero and chums simply couldn't afford the varied locations, zombie armies and helicopters that

characterised later *Dead* movies. But in keeping things small scale, they made a cheap movie that still looks good today. This no-fuss approach also extended to other parts of the film. In a bit of casting that proved unconsciously revolutionary, African-American Duane Jones was cast as the heroic Ben, which added a whole new level of political resonance to proceedings.

The film ends with a shrug of inevitability. Ben is the only survivor to make it through the night. Dawn breaks and then – pop! – a trigger-happy redneck clumsily shoots him in the head. His body is tossed onto a pyre to lie, in a piece of perfect symmetry, next to the zombie from that first graveyard scene. It's an ending that goes beyond bleak into blank nihilism. Humans may have won (for now...) but the implication is clear. The world has changed forever. They're coming to get you, and one day you will be like them too.

Night weathered poor reviews, and as the years passed its reputation grew. Its influence on every modern zombie movie and on low-budget filmmaking in general is hard to overstate. It is – in every sense – a bloody classic. **Will Salmon**



RUSSELL STREINER

Co-producer of *Night Of The Living Dead*

Legend has it that Night took some time to take off. Is that true?

No, it's absolutely false. From the outset we kept track of how the play dates were accumulating. A chain called Associated Theatres, based in Pittsburgh, played *Night* in 17 cinemas. That launched us. A guy called George Stern ran Associated Theatres and told us, the very first night of playing the film, "You boys are going to make \$1 million with this picture because we've never seen a turnout like this for what's basically a drive-in movie". He saw something special, so much so that he called other exhibitors all around the States and told them they had to book this movie if they wanted to make money. That spread through the business like wildfire. So from the start we were seen as more than just another horror picture.

Is it true that African-American areas rioted when Ben was killed?

I wouldn't say rioted, but I will confirm that it surprised the African-American audience as much as it did everyone else. The night the film opened, I saw it in a theatre that had a lot of African-American patrons. I was awestruck, because the audience were standing on their chairs shouting at the characters. They were totally involved with the film and upset when it ended... but not to the point of rioting. They were just vocally angry. But white audiences reacted just the same. Everyone was pulling for this guy to survive and he didn't. No film had done that before us.

When did you become aware that Night was being seen as part of a wave of violent, graphic US films?

I didn't pay attention to the movies that came after *Night*, but I was aware that we were breaking new ground. When the movie came out we experienced everything from hero worship to people thinking we were satanic. Some critics thought we'd made something with no redeeming social value. In 1968, this was a picture that divided people – in Philadelphia there was even a boycott when it was screened in a public library. The problem was, we did too good a job at scaring people!

Calum Waddell





01

DAWN OF THE DEAD

1979  Director: George Romero

Americans sure do love shopping. In a 1995 survey of US teenagers, 92% named it as their favourite leisure activity; only 7% chose spending time with their friends and family.

It was a 1974 visit to the Monroeville mall outside Pittsburgh that inspired George Romero to make a horror film satirising America's obsession with consumerism. "We knew the guy who owned the place socially," recalled Romero. "One day, he gave me a tour of the behind-the-scenes shit... They had sealed-off rooms packed with civil defence stuff, which they had put there in the event of some disaster, and that's what gave me the idea. I mean, my God, here's this cathedral to consumerism, and it's also a bomb shelter just in case society crumbles!"

Three years later, Romero shot *Dawn Of The Dead* in the same mall. It was a tough shoot: a night shift that lasted for four months. "Filming in the mall was hell," Romero later remembered. "We couldn't get in there until all the shops were closed and cleaned up, which meant 10 or 11 at night. Then there was a tavern, a restaurant and a sort of disco that was open until two in the morning, so we couldn't shoot sound until after then." They had to stop again at seven o'clock, when the muzak systems automatically switched on.

The film follows two SWAT team members, a traffic reporter and his partner as they flee from a zombie apocalypse that has unleashed devastation on urban areas across the US. Landing their helicopter on the roof of a shopping mall, they realise that it contains everything they need, and set to work clearing out the undead.

What follows are some ingenious tonal shifts. For much of the time, a world overrun by zombies seems like a fun place to be. As our heroes hare around the shopping mall, blowing out undead brains, you're reminded of childhood games of soldiers. It's violence without consequences: the ultimate game of paintball. And did you ever daydream about winning one of those competitions where you dash round a supermarket filling up a trolley with goodies? *Dawn's* heroes live that dream. They're the kids let loose in the sweet shop who can take whatever they want.

Romero immerses his audience in this orgy of violence and consumption, making you vicariously share their exhilaration and decadent pleasure. Then he sours the dream. Once they've made the perfect nest, a luxury apartment crammed with desirable goodies, they realise that all the material abundance – fine wines,

expensive clothes, bundles of banknotes – is hollow and worthless. It doesn't give them freedom – anything but. They've simply locked themselves in a massive gilded cage. "What have we done to ourselves?" one gasps, as the penny finally drops.

Nowadays, most horror films are witless, "just a thrill ride and not much more" as Romero himself once put it. *Dawn Of The Dead* is different; it hitches its action-adventure thrills to a neat metaphor.

The fact that zombies flock to the mall, unconsciously seeking out the familiarity of routine, suggests that consumerism is the panacea of the braindead. As they gormlessly ride escalators to the strains of goofy muzak, Romero's message is crystal clear: when we shop, we're not human beings, but mere consumers, minds set on autopilot, and little separates us from these dead-eyed vessels of "pure, motorised instinct".

Yet *Dawn* isn't just some dry, high-minded Marxist tract. It's a triumph because, just like the Monroeville mall, it's stocked with everything you could possibly want: haunting moments of utter despair; exciting action, as our heroes dash about securing their new home; slapstick and farce, as the undead are pied in the face... It's zombie cinema's one-stop shop.



KEN FOREE

Peter in
Dawn Of The Dead

What were you doing before Dawn Of The Dead?

I was a struggling off-Broadway actor, doing Shakespeare and things when suddenly, *Dawn Of The Dead* happened – though there was a hurdle about getting involved with it: I was a SAG [Screen Actors' Guild] actor and this was a non-union movie, so I knew I'd be in trouble if they found out.

How did you overcome that?

I didn't! I was the only SAG actor in the film. But I read the script and thought, "Oh my God, they're going to pull guts out of people? And they're going to cut off heads?" So I doubted it was ever going to play in the US. I thought I'd be fine because I didn't believe they'd ever find out. That's how sure I was that it was never going to get a release!

Were you aware of Night Of The Living Dead?

I knew Duane Jones, the star of the original *Night Of The Living Dead* – which is also one of my favourite films. He and I were in a New York theatre group – and no-one knew about Duane's little horror film except me! Of course, *Night* had some guts being eaten and stuff, but it was in black and white, and I think that made it less shocking.

What was it like working with George Romero, and how was the experience of making the movie?

He let you know what he wanted but he gave you a huge amount of freedom – as the best directors do. I still see George, he's a fantastic guy. The cast were great too. Man, we were young! There's a scene where I leap, roll on the floor and shoot a biker. That was fun – but when I last saw the movie I thought, "Boy, if they asked me to do that now I'd tell them to get a stuntman." It was my first lead movie role, and when it came out it was a phenomenon. I was interviewed by all the news stations: NBC, CBS, PBS, you name it – and every newspaper wanted to speak to me too. I had no conception that would happen.

Calum Waddell





WALKING THE WALK

As *The Walking Dead* prepares to return to our TV screens, **Joseph McCabe** speaks to the cast and crew of the eagerly awaited second season

When *The Walking Dead* first shambled onto UK television screens last October, it was, for many a horror fan, no less startling than discovering a genuine reanimated corpse walking down the street. Here, at long last, was a TV series devoted to zombies, essentially offering a new George Romero movie every week. That first season ran for a scant six episodes. However, the approval it received from fans and critics, plus its record-breaking ratings, ensured that Sheriff Rick Grimes (played by British actor Andrew Lincoln) and his merry band of apocalypse survivors would return for a second season. Now, at long last, they're back, in an

expanded season of 13 episodes that will be airing on FX soon.

Their return is a somewhat bittersweet occasion, though. Showrunner Frank Darabont, the man most credited with bringing Robert Kirkman's comic book epic to the small screen, parted ways with AMC in July this year. At the time of writing the reasons were still undisclosed.

However, the bulk of the second season had already been planned by Darabont before his departure (he wrote the first two episodes and co-wrote the third), so we probably shouldn't expect the second run to be a radical departure. The dream of an undead TV show lives on, like all »

TV TO COMIC?

Will the small-screen version influence the original?

"It's very, very important to me that the comic book existed before the show," creator Robert Kirkman says. "I don't want anything about the show to influence me to make the comic book different to how it was before the TV series. I still write the comic exactly the way I did – I haven't switched over to script format."

"If anything, I'm using storytelling techniques from the comic in the show. I do fairly quick scene transitions in the books, and I think that's something that you do in television anyway. So that kind of stuff I'm already doing. Glen Mazzara read the comics and was like, 'You know, this is very TV-like,' and he's been working in television for hundreds of years!"

"But the characters are so different, and the comic book series has been running for so long and so many of the characters have died that I'm almost working with an entirely new cast in the comics. So it's easy for me to go back to the past and alter it for the TV show. But the *Walking Dead* comic book is still the road map. And I still feel like I'm forging ahead and laying ground for the show – if the show runs for 20 years. So we'll see."

There are some elements of the TV show that Kirkman wishes he'd first conceived for the comic, however...

"There are little tidbits here and there," he explains. "Things like Morgan and Rick exchanging walkie-talkies – I think that's a cool bit, a thing I wish I'd thought of. Every episode has three or four different moments where I'm like, 'Oh, I didn't think of that!'"

"It's remarkable that Frank and the writers were able to come at it with a fresh set of eyes, look at what I did, and go, 'Okay, this works, and this could be better, and this will be really cool if we take it in this direction.' And it's great that Shane is still alive."

the best zombies. It's now overseen by Kirkman himself, who scripted one of *The Walking Dead*'s first-season episodes and is now an executive producer on the show. He's joined by fellow execs Gale Anne Hurd and Glen Mazzara.

"I enjoyed living in Kentucky and just writing the comic," Kirkman tells us, considering the latest turn on his career path on a rare day when he's not planning undead mayhem. "But the opportunity was there in the first season. They wanted me to spend much more time in the writers' room, and I didn't do it, just because I wanted to focus on comics. I ended up writing an episode, but I didn't want to spend too much time there. With all the travelling I was doing, half of the time I was



(C) TWD PRODUCTIONS/COURTESY OF AMC

going to LA. So when they asked me to come and work on the second season, in talking to my wife it was like, 'Oh, so you'd travel less if we lived in LA. And we would see you more even though you would be working on the show...' It just ended up being a smart decision all round. Creatively, it's kind of fun to get that opportunity to actually work in a writers' room and see how TV writing is done. I felt as though it was a learning experience I couldn't pass up, for the sake of my career. So I just decided

of a show doing," confirms Sarah Wayne Callies, who plays Grimes's wife, Lori. "In an act of unprecedented generosity, Frank and the writers invited the principle cast in, one at a time, for several hours, to talk about what was going to happen before they started breaking the second season. I sort of expected to come in and have them say, 'Right, this is what we planned for you. Go forth and conquer.' But they had questions, and they really wanted to engage with us – 'How did your

"Every single character has these threads that track so beautifully. Everybody has a really incredible arc"

to dive in feet first. We're going through it and so far it's a lot of fun."

Kirkman's not the only person who's been enjoying a deeper involvement in the show during the second series. "The actors all came into the writers' room," says Hurd, explaining how the cast members have become even more invested in their characters. "That, I think, has informed a lot of this season and how deeply we're going into character with everybody."

"They did something that I've never heard

character feel about this? And when you did this, what were you thinking?" That allowed a sort of collaborative feedback loop.

"The scripts that have come out of that have been not only really rich and wonderful, but every single character has these threads that track so beautifully. There's no character that's just *there*. Everybody has a really incredible arc you could build a whole show around."

Character arcs weren't the only area in which the production team got an early start,



Greg Nicotero's make-up is one of *The Walking Dead*'s strong suits.



The game will launch new heroes and scenarios for fans of the series.

GAME OF DEATH

The Walking Dead advances on the world of videogames

The contagion started in comic books. Then it mutated and transferred to TV. After that it was never going to take long before the outbreak was passed on to consoles. The new *Walking Dead* videogame is currently in development at Telltale Games (the tasty brains behind recent *Monkey Island* and *Back To The Future* titles), who say it will sit nicely within the comic book canon.

"The game adheres to the continuity of the comics," says designer Jake Rodkin. "It's hopefully similar to the TV show, in that the comic is the hub and the TV series is a spoke off that – we're another spoke."

You won't, however, play the game as Rick Grimes. "His story's already been told once in the comics and in the TV series, and we wanted to empower players to make choices and have to deal with the same crazy issues that the cast of the comic does, but without the safety net of knowing what Rick did and how it turned out."

Instead, you find yourself in the shoes of new character Lee Everett. "At the start of the game you meet him in the back of a police car, and it starts off a bit ambiguous as to how he's got there and what he's done," Rodkin explains. "Over the

course of the game you meet other people, some of whom maybe know a bit of your backstory, and it's up to the player to manage how much of a secret you keep your past from the rest of the camp."

Lee won't be crossing Rick's path as he tries to avoid getting bitten, though. "We want to keep this in-canon and there isn't a panel in the comic book where Rick and Lee say hello. But because Lee doesn't spend the first month of the zombie outbreak in a coma, you will see things that Rick didn't, and get to meet characters who show up later in the books."

The game's visual style will be more comic book than photo-real. "We've tried as hard as we can to get a look that we feel is stylised and evokes the comic," says Rodkin. "But at the same time it isn't so in your face that it overpowers the story and the dramatic intensity of what has to happen, which can happen if you push your style too far over your content."

And rest assured, there will be blood. "We want it to be true to *The Walking Dead*," explains Rodkin. "Which means there's probably some despicable business going on in this game!"

Richard Edwards



SHANE DAMAGE

Actor **Jon Bernthal** discusses the guy we love to hate

Of all the series' characters, Rick Grimes's former partner Shane Walsh is the trickiest to get a handle on. At times, such as when he's bonding with young Carl Grimes, he seems like a decent sort. At other moments, like when he's trying to force himself on Lori Grimes, he's utterly loathsome. For actor Jon Bernthal, a pivotal moment in this fascinating character's development came when Shane pounded the face of wife-beater Ed Peletier.

"It's a really interesting thing that Shane finds out in that moment," Bernthal explains. "Which is that in this new world, there are no rules. I think Shane also discovers it in the woods with Rick, when he's got the gun and he trains it on Rick. Shane's sort of the first one to realise that you can kind of do whatever you want and there are no repercussions – there's nobody to answer to. When he beats that guy down [Ed Peletier], he feels that he can go as far as he wants. Looking into the future, I think the zombies are going to become something you can deal with. But people living in a lawless world, with their wants and desires and their power struggles – that's where real danger occurs, and there are a lot of things that are going to happen with Shane that I think make that very exciting."

So what kind of place is Shane in, emotionally, when we see him again in season two?

"You're seeing a guy who's extremely lonely," Bernthal says. "And there's two kinds of loneliness in this world: the loneliness you suffer when you're separated from the people you love, and another kind, which is when you're with the people you love but they don't love you the way you love them. That can be the most painful and cutting loneliness, and when a man suffers from that it will bring out the best of him but also the worst of him. I think that's what we're going to see with Shane; we're going to see all kinds of sides from him."

Season one drew accusations of sexism from some quarters, partly because of chauvinist remarks made by Shane in the opening episode, but also because female characters rarely stepped up to the plate. How does Bernthal respond to such charges?

"I welcome all criticism, and everyone's entitled to their opinions," he says. "I think there was a conscious decision there. The theme was laid out for the audience; there's that scene of the women washing by the river and they're talking about it. I think that when society has gone and you're stripped to your bare elements, most of the time the men are going to deal with things that, back in cavemen times, men dealt with, and the women are going to deal with things that women dealt with."

"But I think that's going to bend as time goes on, with [comic character] Michonne, and Andrea becoming a complete badass with a gun. These women are going to step up and realise the lawless nature of where they're living and that there are no rules, and that's going to flip on its head. One of the things that I really love about the show is that there's nothing that will be in it that won't come back and be completely refuted, or seen from another angle. So I think that whole concept is going to get turned on its ass by the end of this next season."

Ian Berriman



Not sure your best model pose is going to help here, Shane.

(C) TWO PRODUCTIONS/COURTESY OF



As characters develop, the conflicted Shane should only get more interesting.



Two things we shouldn't have said were weird: their teeth and eyes.



thanks to make-up supremo Greg Nicotero. "Greg had zombie make-up done months before we even started shooting," explains Hurd, "because there were discussions early on, before the scripts were even complete, when they were just concepts. We had sketches for the 13 episodes; they'd already come up with some really cool zombies."

"One of the things about this season is that I made kind of a weird list," Nicotero reveals. "Like the do's and don'ts of season two – what I need to improve upon, regarding make-up and the characters. I think the make-up on this show is better than it was last year. We had six episodes last year, to get our leverage, and as we started gaining momentum we began figuring out cool little things. This year we hit the ground running, so we got to iron out some of the things we wanted to work on last season. We've had new contact lenses made and

a lot of new pieces sculpted. I think at one point people were just assuming that we'd take some moulds from last year and run with pieces, and I'm like, 'No! We can improve upon everything that we did last year!' So we're using a lot of silicone prosthetic pieces and we're kind of trying to push it a little further. A lot further, actually."

That same spirit of self-improvement has extended to the cast as it prepares for the next major storyline taken from the comic, centered on Hershel's Farm, a temporary sanctuary for Grimes and co, where they meet a family of survivors, and the ever-resourceful Glenn finds a girlfriend.

"We shot for two and a half months last year, for six episodes," says actor Jeffrey DeMunn, who plays wise veteran survivor Dale. "And now that they're making 13, it's five months of shooting. Last year's pilot, we had 13 days to shoot. And this year it's eight days per episode. The majority of the directors were with us last year. Production guys and visual effects are back. Pretty much everybody that was there last year is back, so there's a shorthand that we've developed."

"If the show continues for a couple of years," DeMunn laughs, "we won't even have to go to work. We'll have it down so well that we'll just wake up and do it. 'Good shoot, Jeff!' 'Oh, thanks, Greg!'"

The second season of *The Walking Dead* premieres on FX this October. To read more on Greg Nicotero's career see page 106.

RAVES FROM THE GRAVE

Robert Kirkman reveals his zombie favourites

"*Day Of The Dead*," answers Robert Kirkman when asked to name his most-loved zombie film. "It's the third Romero movie, and it's the one that has the best zombies. I like how bleak it is. I think the opening scene is cinematically historic. They use the audio in a Gorillaz song. I love how the zombies come alive and destroy the Florida city with no people in it; I like the bunker – it's just really great. It's by far my favourite zombie movie. And *Shaun Of The Dead* is an amazing movie. Sometimes I think it's my second-favourite zombie movie."

Day Of The Dead also features Kirkman's number one sequence of zombie carnage. "Rhodes, when he's getting pulled in half," he laughs. "Everybody loves that one. When he's screaming, 'Choke on 'em!'"

As for Kirkman's top zombie novel, the writer says he's "extremely partial" to Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend*, but that he's avoiding some recent fan favourites.

"Even though it's not really a zombie novel, *I Am Legend* inspired Romero and kind of started the whole "zombies take over the world" craze. But I'll be honest with you, I haven't read a lot of zombie novels. I avoid the work of Max Brooks, just because I feel like I'm treading a lot of similar ground. I wouldn't want it to inspire me in any way. But I'm sure they're great books."

And zombie comics? Kirkman is aware that before *The Walking Dead* there weren't all that many successful ones.

"You know, there really wasn't any zombie comic that had a big impact on me," he says. "I found out about *Deadworld*'s existence after I'd done *The Walking Dead*, and that was really the only long-running zombie comic that I'm aware of today. I read *Zombie World* – it was a book that Dark Horse did; Mike Mignola kicked it off with Pat McKeown. The "Winter's Dregs" storyline by Bob Fingerman and Tommy Lee Edwards is really kind of amazing, and I like that quite a bit. But as far as zombie comics, there really just weren't that many around."

"Different things have influenced me," Kirkman goes on. "Erik Larsen's *Savage Dragon*, Steven Spielberg... I would like to say Quentin Tarantino, but I don't know if I'm good enough to claim him as an influence. I could watch all of his movies back to back in succession every minute of my life!"





CHARLIE HIGSON

Writing Young Adult horror books about zombies is absolutely *nothing* like making love to a beautiful woman, as **Ian Berriman** discovers

Charlie Higson's career has had some interesting twists and turns. In the '80s he was lead singer of punk-funk band The Higsons. In the '90s he found fame on *The Fast Show*. Then he achieved success writing children's books, with the *Young Bond* titles. Now he's moved into horror fiction with Young Adult series *The Enemy*. It's set in a UK where a virus has turned pretty much everyone over 14 into a savage sort-of-zombie, leaving the young 'uns struggling to survive. So did the author avidly consume horror books during his own childhood?

"No, not particularly," Higson says. "I mean, there weren't any around for kids. When I was a teenager I read things like *The Pan Book Of Horror Stories* – that was what teenagers read, because they were really gory and occasionally had sex in them! But I would watch all the Hammer films late at night on TV, when my parents were out."

The author didn't get bitten by the zombie bug until he was at university in the late '70s, when the 18-year-old Higson co-organised a screening of George Romero's *Night Of The Living Dead*.

"I was a big fan of horror films and had a friend who was too," Higson explains. "Now you can just sit at your computer and click, there it is – but you had to work a bit harder then! If it wasn't shown on TV, or at a cinema like the Scala in London that'd screen old movies, you couldn't watch these films. We wanted to watch a lot of horror films that we hadn't been able to see, so we put on an all-night horror session and rented the films."

"*Night Of The Living Dead* came on second or third. It was quite late at night, so there were a lot of drunken students who were quite rowdy and up for taking the piss! The opening scene is slightly cheesy, and you're thinking, 'This could go either way...' but by the end there was absolute silence in the cinema – everyone was utterly gripped and traumatised by it. You hadn't really seen anything like that in those days."

So what was it about *Night Of The Living Dead*'s flesh-eaters that so unnerved the youthful Higson?

"There's something uniquely unsettling about zombies," he says. "I think it's mainly because they're *people*. The most frightening bit in zombie films is always when someone you

know and love becomes infected and turns on you. That goes right back to childhood nightmares of being somewhere with your family, and your family suddenly aren't your real family – they become weird creatures who wanna kill you. That's it, for me: that someone you love is trying to kill and eat you. And you can't reason with them, you can't say, 'Look, can we just stop and talk about this? This is ridiculous!' And it taps into our fears of disease and death; it reminds us very strongly of the fact that we are mortal."

The Enemy and its follow-ups may be aimed at a Young Adult audience, but they certainly don't pull any punches. Even the littlest kids meet horrible deaths, and certain sequences – like one where a boy's taken in by a couple living in an abandoned Tube train, who turn out to be cannibals – are creepy enough to send a chill down grown-up spines.

"I wanted to give kids the same kind of visceral kick I got watching *Night Of The Living Dead*," Higson explains. "Modern kids are living in a world where they can sit at their computer and watch *The Exorcist* and all this stuff where they built up the mystique of 'Do you dare go to the cinema?' Now they just click and watch this stuff, and they get quite immune to it. If you're gonna write a book, you have to compete with all the stuff that they can so readily get

online, through DVDs – because most households don't put their 18-certificate DVDs out of reach – and computer games, which are incredibly gory. So I knew that I had to compete with that."

"I can't swear as much as I would in an adult book, and I can't really write about sex, but other than that I haven't really written them any differently than if they were adult books – it just so happens the protagonists are young people. I've found that sometimes parents are getting more scared than the kids, because the mothering instinct or whatever takes over; they can picture it happening to their own kids and they get quite upset. Whereas kids reading it want you to kill everybody. They love the gore!"

That's just one way in which different age groups might react differently to the series. Younger readers may also come away with a better understanding of how much their elders do for them. "Yes, and that's precisely something I talk about when I do talks to kids," Higson says. "My starting point for the books »

"The most frightening bit in zombie films is always when someone you know and love becomes infected and turns on you"



DEAD RISING

Why are the undead so popular?

When asked why zombies have become the *monster du jour*, Charlie Higson has a pragmatic explanation.

"They're very useful in popular culture in things such as games and kids' books," he says, "because even though they're humans, they're already dead, so you can kill as many of them as you like! I remember there was a famous case in one of the car-driving videogames, where you've basically got to run over as many people as possible. They tried to launch it in Germany, and the Germans are much more squeamish about these things and have much higher regulation, and they said, 'You can't bring this game out – it's encouraging people to run each other over!' So the designers simply put in a bit of code that changed all the blood from red to green. Then they went back and said, 'It's alright because it's zombies!' 'Oh fine, you can run over as many zombies as you like!' So they're the perfect villains for games and films, because you're allowed to kill as many as you like. There's always a problem, in any film with, 'Who do you make the villains? Are they going to be evil Muslims or black drug dealers? Are they going to be Russian gangsters or Communists? Because history changes and suddenly the people who are your villains are now your best friends, and you're not allowed to watch those films anymore, cos they're terribly non-PC. Whereas if you make them zombies you've got carte blanche to splatter them all over the wall. There's never gonna be a zombie pressure group saying, 'How dare you present us in this way? We're pillars of society!'"



Charlie Higson: a man with some very unusual friends.

was a fantasy I had when I was a kid: wouldn't it be brilliant if all the adults suddenly disappeared and you had the run of the place to yourself, and could use all this cool stuff adults don't play around with as much as they should, and live in amazing places, and go to museums and use all the stuff there rather than just look at it through glass boxes?

"I remember, as a kid, going to the Imperial War Museum and seeing all those weapons and thinking, 'I wish I could get them out and play with them, and dress up in the uniforms,' so it was trying to tap into that childish delight. But then I talk to the kids about how quickly that'd become very difficult, because you'd soon realise that us boring adults do a hell of a lot to make your lives liveable and comfortable – generating electricity, growing food and whatever."

The "amazing places" kids explore in Higson's series include landmarks such as Buckingham Palace, The Oval and Arsenal's Emirates Stadium. By the sound of it, he should be getting referral fees from the London Tourist Board!

"I've had quite a lot of parents say to me, 'Oh god, the kids have dragged me up to London, we've got to go to all these places because they've read about them in your books!'" Higson laughs, "so I am doing my small bit for London tourism!"

He's done his own fair share of that, embarking on behind-the-scenes trips for research purposes.

"I had a really nice tour of the Imperial War Museum," Higson recalls, "I was really disappointed though, because they couldn't get authorisation to get in the vaults there. They have a huge store of all the weapons they can't put on display, including ammunition and everything. You could actually arm a small army from the Imperial War Museum!"

Writing in iconic locations isn't just a way of blagging free days out, though...

"I'm a big fan of American hard-boiled crime writing where they're very specific," Higson explains. "If they're driving down a road they'll tell you what that road is, and it gives a certain authenticity to things. I remember Ian Fleming wrote about writing about James Bond books, which are fantastical. He said, 'If you can get the everyday stuff feeling right, it gives you licence to go over the top. It's interesting: I was talking to Darren Shan recently and he takes the opposite approach. His vampire series is not set anywhere specific, and he said that then kids reading it anywhere around the world can imagine it going on around them. He said, 'I used to hate it when I read books written in America and it'd talk about somewhere and I didn't know where that was, and I felt excluded.' I've always felt the opposite. I like that feeling of verisimilitude. Ian Fleming said, 'Why should I have James Bond stay at the 'Portchester Hotel'? He's going to stay at the Dorchester!'"

The third book in the series came out recently. Higson's been commissioned to write six, and drops an intriguing hint about something that will feature in the future.

"I've got plans to incorporate an aspect of coming back from the dead in later books. But I'd better not talk much about that now..."

Even when that contract comes to an end, it doesn't sound like he'll be bidding farewell to his sort-of-zombies.

"I think I'm going to have a lot of options of where I can go with it," he muses. "I can go back in time and show a bit more of when the disease first struck; I can go forwards in time and look at the children of the characters from the first series; I could go somewhere else around the world... I'm going to leave my options open and see what would be the most fun way to carry on if I felt I wanted to after six – which I probably will."



Charlie Higson's *The Fear* is available in hardback now, published by Puffin.



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PASTA MASTERS

Italy was once a hotbed of zombie horror. Calum Waddell looks back at the Roman legacy in all things undead

You may think that living-dead delirium has recently reached ludicrous levels of overkill (did anyone actually ask for *The Zombie Diaries 2?*), but the Italians were exhausting almost every innard-eating scenario imaginable three decades ago. Think fast-moving, flesh-craving corpses only began with *28 Days Later*? Then prepare to be surprised, because Rome-based B-movie maverick Umberto Lenzi was there way back in 1980 with *Nightmare City*.

Nowadays, direct-to-DVD Romero rip-offs seem to be appearing every other week, but the Italians got in first. In 1979, only one year after *Dawn Of The Dead* was released in Italy under the title *Zombi*, journeyman filmmaker Lucio Fulci churned out an unofficial sequel called *Zombi 2*. This, in turn, was followed by Andrea Bianchi's *Zombi 3* (1981), after which Fulci himself made his own *Zombi 3* (1988), which in turn was superseded by *Zombi 4* (1988) and *Zombi 5* (1987) – yes, *Zombi 5* was actually completed and released a full year before its predecessor. Not that any of this matters, mind, because none of these movies have anything to do

with one another. They do, however, have the knack of sending the seasoned scholar of splatter cinema into something of a spin... Welcome to the films of the living dead: Italian style.

But let's backtrack a little. Although *Zombi 2* was undoubtedly the catalyst for the Italian zombie explosion, it was 1974's *The Living Dead At The Manchester Morgue* that inspired the initial trickle

Dawn Of The Dead (which had more of an impact in Italy than its homeland), whose flesh-hungry hordes were cartoonish in nature, with garish green and blue complexions. When De Rossi returned to the living dead with the Fulci classic *Zombi 2*, his goal was to give the ghouls a great new look.

"In Italy we like to be more realistic," De Rossi tells *SFX*. "Even in the Westerns we were

"We wanted our zombies to look like they had just burst out from the ground – with maggots, missing eyes and rotting teeth!"

of Rome-based bloodbaths. This Spanish/Italian co-production introduced audiences to the special-effects wizardry of Giannetto De Rossi, who honed his craft here before embarking upon a career alongside director Lucio Fulci. The fact that the ghouls in *Manchester Morgue* looked exactly like rotting corpses was an indication of what was to come. It was certainly a step forward from 1978's

more realistic. In American Westerns the heroes always had clean trousers, but in Italian Westerns the actors would be dirty and covered in blood – so it was the same with horror. We wanted to cut throats and explode heads and be as realistic as possible. And we wanted our zombies to look like they had just burst out from the ground – with maggots, missing eyes and rotten teeth!"

Blood and guts

This was exactly what *Zombi 2* demonstrated. Whereas Romero's rotting corpses were somewhat comical, Fulci's were downright sinister – tearing open throats, chewing innards and even wrestling underwater with sharks (in a sequence recently used in adverts for Windows 7 – see tinyurl.com/zombiewindows). Sure, Fulci's zombies moved so s-l-o-w-l-y that the characters had to stand still for several seconds in order for the buggers to get close enough to bite chunks out of them, but this aside, *Zombi 2* was a rollicking thrill ride. Owing more to »



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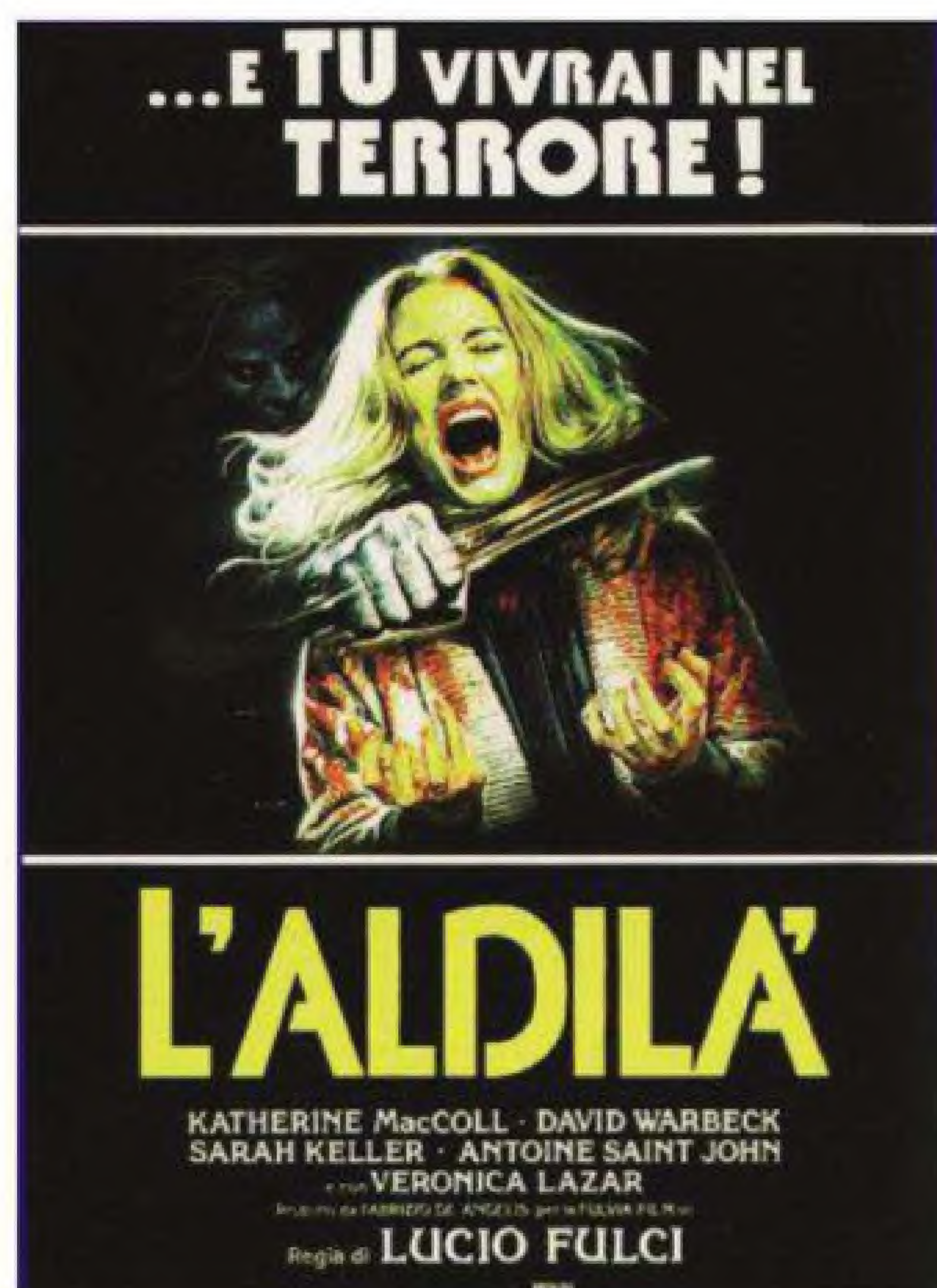
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Burial Ground was released
as Zombi 3 in Italy



the likes of Jacques Tourneur's *I Walked With A Zombie* (1943), from which it borrows its Caribbean primary location, Hammer's *The Plague Of The Zombies* (1966) and Romero's original *Night Of The Living Dead* than to the more politically aware *Dawn Of The Dead*, *Zombi 2* was renamed *Zombie Flesh Eaters* in the UK, where it was banned as a "video nasty". The infamous moment in which a screaming woman has her eyeball impaled on a shard of wood by one of the living dead was the first instance of Fulci being charged with misogyny.

"I wrote the eyeball scene in *Zombi 2* because I liked the scene from Dario Argento's *The Bird With The Crystal Plumage*, where someone is attacked when spying through a keyhole," explains Dardano Sacchetti, who co-wrote all of Fulci's zombie films, as well as the director's notorious slasher sickie *The New York Ripper*. "However, I did think that Lucio was a misogynist. Often if there was a scene where a girl was being attacked or whatever, then he really took over those scenes. There was very much a difference to Fulci when a man was being stabbed than when a woman was being stabbed."

Zombi 2 was a massive hit in cinemas across the world, giving numerous Italian Z-film directors an all-new template to rip off. The first results included the aforementioned *Nightmare City* (1980),



ZOMBI HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR

Actor Ian McCulloch spent the '70s and '80s immersed in the Italian horror industry. Here, he recalls his work

Ian McCulloch had a brief but memorable career in Italian zombie carnage cinema, headlining and surviving the blood-drenched madness of both *Zombi 2* and its lookalike follow-up *Zombi Holocaust* (which actually used the same sets and locations as its Fulci-made inspiration). In addition to these, McCulloch featured in 1980's science fiction-themed "video nasty" *Contamination* – originally released in Italy as *Alien 2*, before some lawyers from CBS Fox decided otherwise. Prior to battling the undead, the Scottish-born McCulloch was best known for featuring in the cult '70s TV show *Survivors*. These days he's retired from acting and runs a farm in the north of Scotland.

Why do you think *Zombi 2* continues to endure among fans of horror cinema?

I guess zombies just never go out of fashion! Look at the George Romero stuff – he's still making new ones, and I read about a movie they're doing that mixes *Pride And Prejudice* with zombies. I think that the people who enjoy the genre follow it loyally.

Do you remember how you reacted when you saw *Zombi 2* for the first time?

What struck me the most was that it looked as if a lot of money had been spent on it – and you couldn't really tell that from acting in it! I think the real stars of that movie were the cameraman and Giannetto De Rossi, who is a special effects genius. He was very talented. As for Fulci himself, I never saw another film by him and I honestly didn't like him very much, but he pulled this little adventure off. It made him and ruined him at the same time. After that he couldn't do anything *but* horror films. It doesn't really have a good storyline, the dialogue was terrible, the acting was awful – myself included – but somehow it worked and people still like it.

Were you there when they shot the sequence where a zombie fights a shark?

No, I wasn't. I was quite surprised when I saw that, actually, because it has nothing to do with the plot of the film, does it? It just kind of happens! I remember the beautiful girl who swims with the shark – an actress called Aurette Gay – and she just takes off her clothes, hops in the sea and along comes a zombie. It's supposed to be one of the iconic bits of the film, but I thought it was just very silly!

There's no continuity in *Zombi 2*; the actor is supposed to be eating the shark, but there are no bite marks on it!

You followed your experience on the Fulci film by shooting *Zombi Holocaust*, which also had cannibals in it. What are your recollections of making that movie?

The cannibals were all Vietnamese boat people. They needed the money, but they were all strict vegetarians, so they would eat these raw livers and then throw up. It was just not a part of their normal diet, I suppose!

You only made three Italian horror movies altogether. Why not more?

Well I would have done more of them in a shot – I wouldn't even have asked to see a script or cared about the money I was paid. They were just lots of fun to do! But I think back then, after you did two or three, they would replace you. I think my replacement was David Warbeck, who did *The Beyond* for Lucio Fulci. I was approached to do a Dario Argento film, but it never worked out, unfortunately. I was getting too old anyway, and David Warbeck was a better-looking bloke!

in which zombies invade a television studio to slaughter dancers, and 1981's *Burial Ground*, which cheekily replayed *Zombi 2*'s eye-shredding sequence – and originally launched itself in Italy as *Zombi 3*! This clunker also features a child ghoul biting off one of his mother's breasts when she offers him a feed, and lots of confused amateur actors running around a creaky old castle, being chased by others sporting some of the worst living dead make-up ever created for the big screen.

Another product of this period was *Zombie Creeping Flesh* (1980), a hilariously awful film in which a virus sparks an undead apocalypse in New Guinea. This could have resulted in interesting undertones of the Third World coming back to devour the affluent West, but the end result is more concerned with badly executed gore effects – although someone, somewhere, found them convincing enough to earn *Zombie Creeping Flesh* a place on the UK's "video nasty" list.

Wonderful nonsense

In addition to these, 1980's *Alien* cash-in *Contamination* stole *Zombi 2*'s leading man, Ian McCulloch, as well as its Brooklyn Bridge sequence, while the same year's *Zombi Holocaust* (or, as it's known over here, er, *Zombie Holocaust*) – which also

featured McCulloch – gave us cannibals *and* undead flesh-eaters. As the title suggests, the plot was part *Cannibal Holocaust* and part *Zombi 2* – although its pedestrian pace and slapdash special effects meant that the resulting romp was nowhere near as interesting as it should have been.

Fulci himself, however, was still at the top of his game. 1980's *City Of The Living Dead* is an utterly outrageous story of arisen ghouls controlled by a dead priest, with a bunch of in-the-know journalists and psychiatrists doing their damndest to save the world with only 24 hours' notice. If that sounds as if it makes no sense, then that's because it doesn't – but then again, Fulci's work is





ZOMBIES UNTER KANNIBALEN

Darsteller:

JAN McCULLOCH · ALEXANDRA DELLI COLLI
SHERRY BUCHANAN · DONALD O'BRIEN
PETER O'NEAL · JOSEP PERSAUD

Regie:

FRANCESCO MARTINO

Eine Farbfilm-Produktion der Flora-Film S. r. l., Rom
im *Aemania* / *arabella* -Filmverleih



The Indonesian poster for
Lucio Fulci's *The Beyond*.

“Lucio Fulci would shout and scream and stamp and he taught me some wonderful Italian swear words... he was like a big grizzly bear”

characterised by a distinctly esoteric, dreamlike attitude towards logic.

“When I read the script to *City Of The Living Dead*, I wondered: ‘What do I have to do in this film?’” explains Catriona MacColl, who took on leading lady duties in three Fulci classics. “Well, it turned out my role was to combat evil and put things right in the world. It didn’t make any sense whatsoever, but I thought, ‘Well, at least I’ll have the chance to express fear and do a lot of screaming,’ and I thought that was quite interesting. I mean, why not delve into the dark side of yourself? As for Lucio... He would shout and scream and stamp – and he taught me some wonderful Italian swear words! He never frightened me, though. He was like a big grizzly bear.”

Fulci was quickly becoming a highly influential zombie auteur, even rivalling Romero. *The Beyond* (1981) mixed zombies with a stylish “haunted mansion” story, and *The House By The Cemetery* (1981) saw a 150-year-old professor staying alive through self-inflicted skin grafts and limb

replacement. Both boast wonderful widescreen photography and a believable sense of dread and doom. However, as with *Zombie Flesh Eaters*, they were banned outright in the UK for several years.

Genre politics

“Luckily, when the whole censorship debate was going around these films, I didn’t know too much about it,” smiles the British-born MacColl. “I was only made aware of it several years later when my brother told me there was a seminar taking place in London and they were discussing video nasties. Then he pointed out that I was in two of them! I was greatly disturbed by that, because who would want that on their résumé? So after *The House By The Cemetery* I just got on with trying to have as varied and interesting a career as possible.”

Unfortunately, Fulci himself had no such luck. After *The House By The Cemetery* his career hit a dry spell, taking in the dull adventure flick *Conquest* (1983), futuristic action flop *The New Gladiators* (1984) and a dire attempt to rip off Dario

THE EYES HAVE IT

Italian zombie horror loves its ocular trauma!

The late Lucio Fulci once said in an interview that the eyes should be the first thing destroyed in a horror movie. “We have all seen too much evil in this world,” he reasoned. *Zombi 2*’s sequence of a cornea being crushed on a pointed shard of wood seemed to act as a catalyst all over Rome. Subsequent Italian splatter classics, such as *Zombi Holocaust* (which had a chap having his peepers poked out and eaten), *Burial Ground* (which replayed *Zombi 2*’s centrepiece using a shard of glass) and *The Beyond* (zombie spiders eat an eyeball) turned the level of retina-ripping up to 11. Even the remarkably shoddy *Zombie Creeping Flesh* got in on the action, as a ghoul pops someone’s eyeball out via their mouth – quite an impressive feat!



Argento’s *Phenomena* in the form of *Aenigma* (1987). With Rome’s number-one purveyor of plasma-soaked shockers now reduced to cheapo, direct-to-video dreck, the Italian zombie boom was soon a thing of the past.

“The horror genre ended in Italy because of politics,” sighs Dardano Sacchetti. “Italy is a particular country – we have politics that you don’t! They are as particular as pizza, pasta and the mandolin! Instead of making a film and doing big money at the box office, the producers would prefer to take \$2 million, put \$1 million in their pocket and then make the movie for half the price! So in the mid ’80s, when commercial TV channels became popular, they wanted films that could be seen by everyone under 18 so that they could make more money via the adverts. At this point there was no more money for genre cinema – the producers who in the past took risks with this type of cinema played it safe with TV.”

Despite this move towards a different medium, hope was in the air when, in 1988, it was

VOX FLOPS

The dubbing wasn't always of the best quality...

Contrary to popular perception, no-one in an Italian horror film was actually dubbed from Italian into English. As the movies were made for the international market and had to appear anglicised to make it in America, they were always shot without a soundtrack. This way, even actors with the hardest of Italian accents could be looped in post-production. While many of the stars were able to record their own voices (the multi-lingual Catriona MacColl dubbed herself into English, French and Italian), hilarity would sometimes ensue.

The best example is surely that of child actor Giovanni Frezza, who had his role in *The House By The Cemetery* voiced for the international version by an adult woman, rather creepily pretending to be a little boy...

"Oh dear... I am so sorry about that voice," laughs Frezza. "It wasn't me, of course, and I agree that it's one of the worst accents in history. In Italy it wasn't my voice, either, in *The House By The Cemetery* – but it did at least sound like it was a child!"



Looks sweet; sounds ridiculous

revealed that Lucio Fulci would be making his big comeback with a 3D sequel to *Zombi 2*.

"Fulci horror movies had big expectations about them after *Zombi 2*," explains Giannetto De Rossi. "But if something is successful, the Italian financiers think you are only good for this one kind of movie. So they never offered Lucio other types of films after *Zombi 2*. This frustrated him. I never worked on *Zombi 3*, but I heard it was a very troubled project."

Dead genre walking

It certainly was. With the budget cut so low that the idea of 3D had to be dropped entirely, and Fulci himself only finishing two-thirds of the film due to illness, the film was completed by Bruno Mattei, the man behind the previously mentioned *Zombie Creeping Flesh*. Featuring fast-moving, implement-carrying zombies (an idea that, at the time, was scoffed at by critics), *Zombi 3* suffers from awful acting, dreadful make-up effects and a Philippines location that looks dusty and ugly. However, there's still some fun to be had – including a zombie DJ, kamikaze killer seagulls and a hungry decapitated head that flies out from a refrigerator!

Jetzt kommt er . . . der **neueste** Zombie-Film!



Sadly, this was the last chance for the Italian take on the living dead to chomp a big bite out of the box office. Subsequent efforts – such as the virtually unwatchable *Zombi 4* and *5* – were made for the VHS market, while the American-made likes of *Return Of The Living Dead* and the *Re-Animator* series were soon stealing the splatter-fan idolisation once reserved for Fulci.

Yet three decades later, Fulci's original quartet of zombie masterpieces has endured. All can be found on deluxe home video releases – *The Beyond* has even been championed by Tarantino and re-released to American theatres courtesy of Oscar-winning editor Bob Murawski (who cut together Sam Raimi's *Spider-Man* movies). Even second-tier offerings such as *Burial Ground* and *Zombi Holocaust* can claim a fan following (US Blu-rays of both have recently been unveiled). Sadly, despite the current climate, the chances of a resurrection for the genre itself remain slim.

"I don't think you will ever see the return of Italian horror," sighs Sacchetti. "The producers who once made these movies now see them as a big risk. But the good thing is, at least with DVD we'll always have the memories..."



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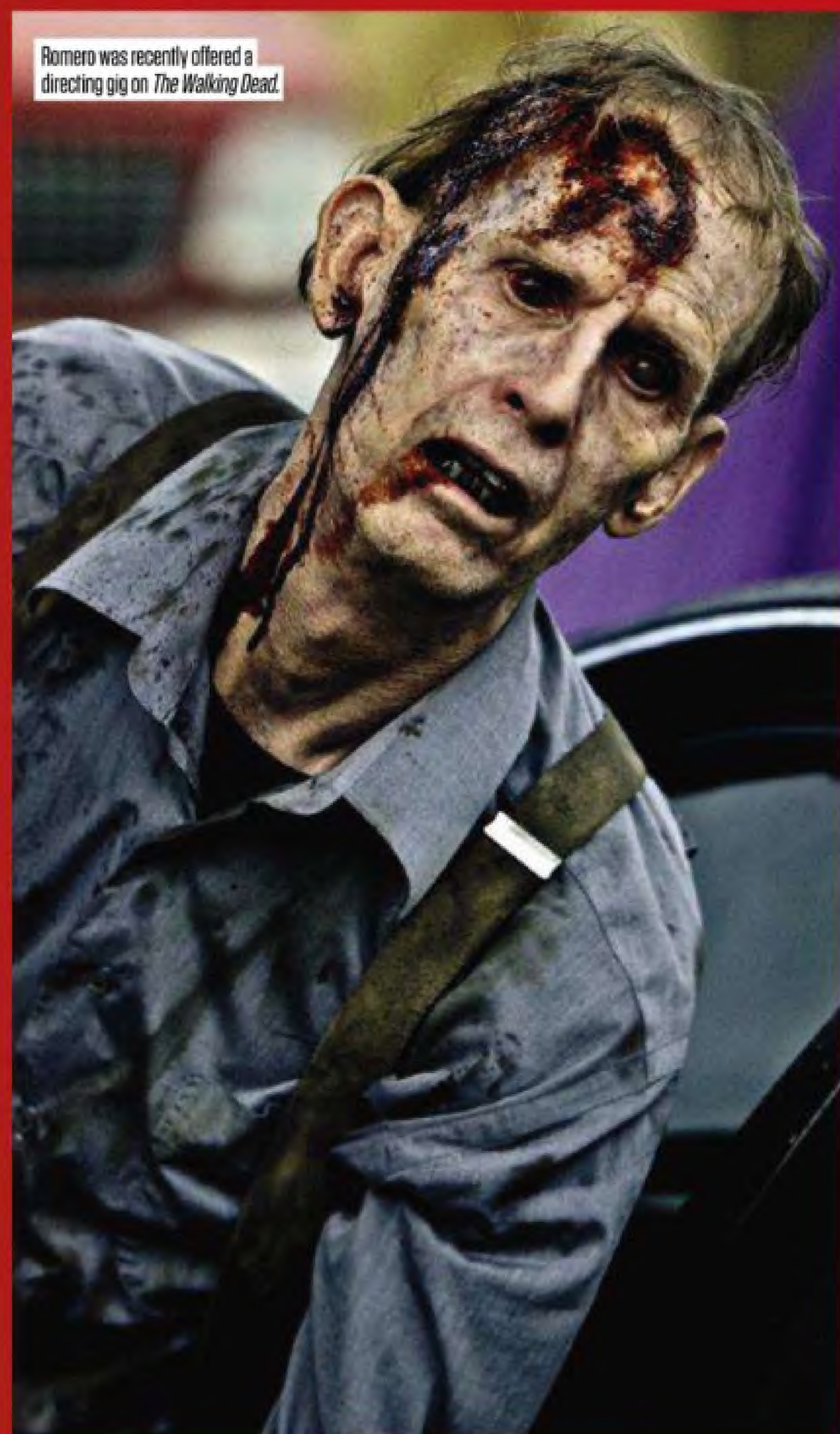


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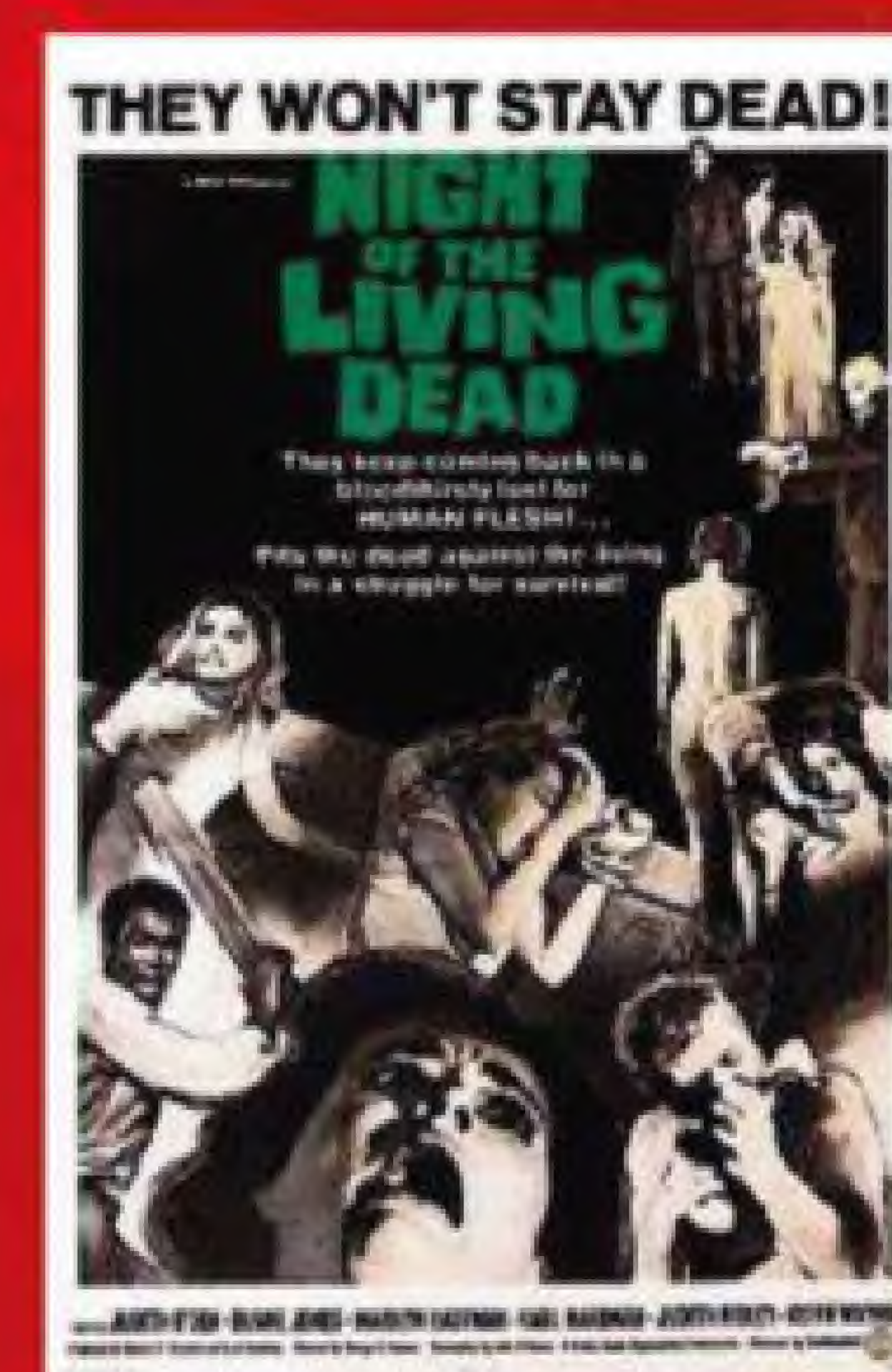
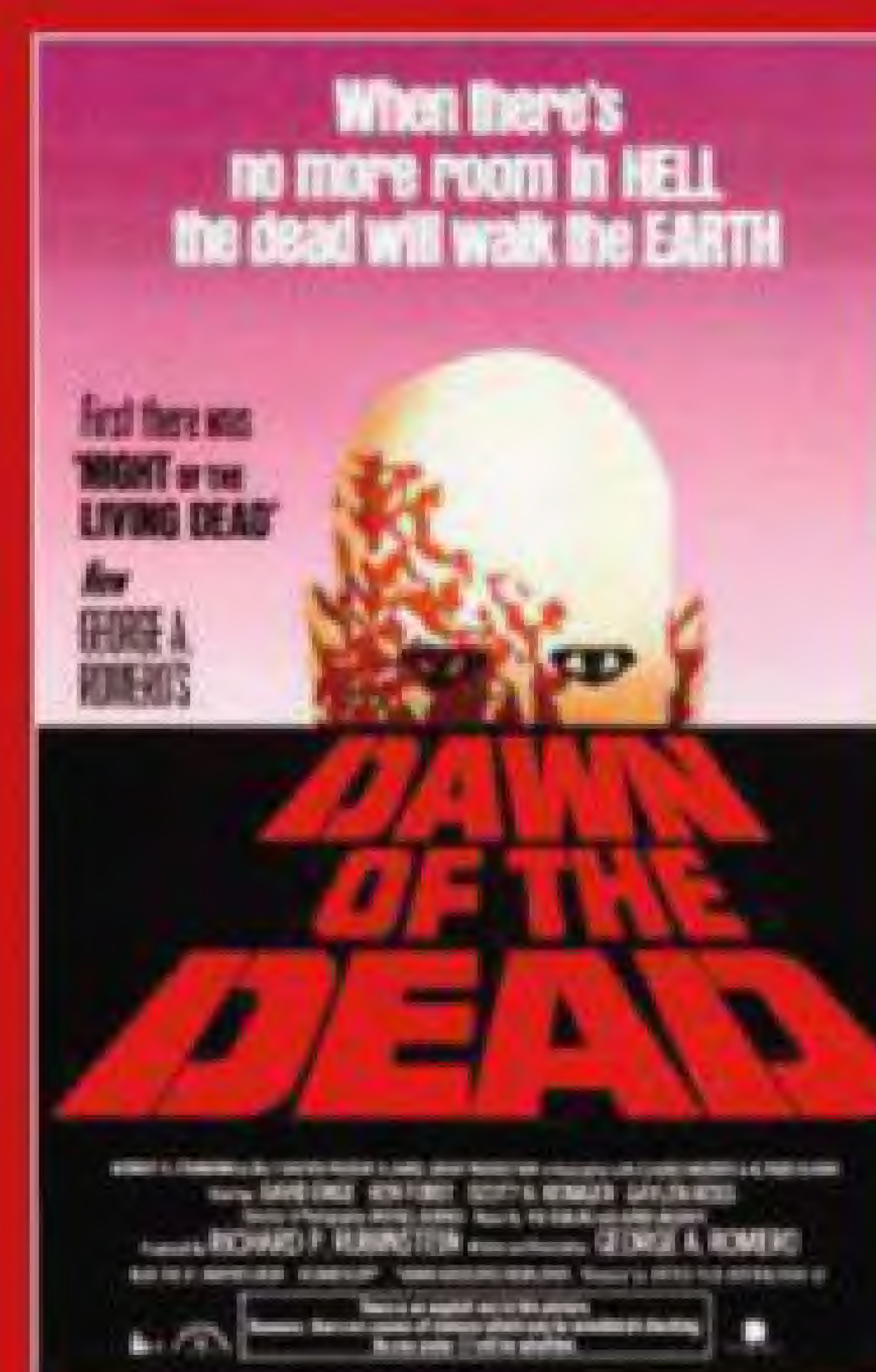
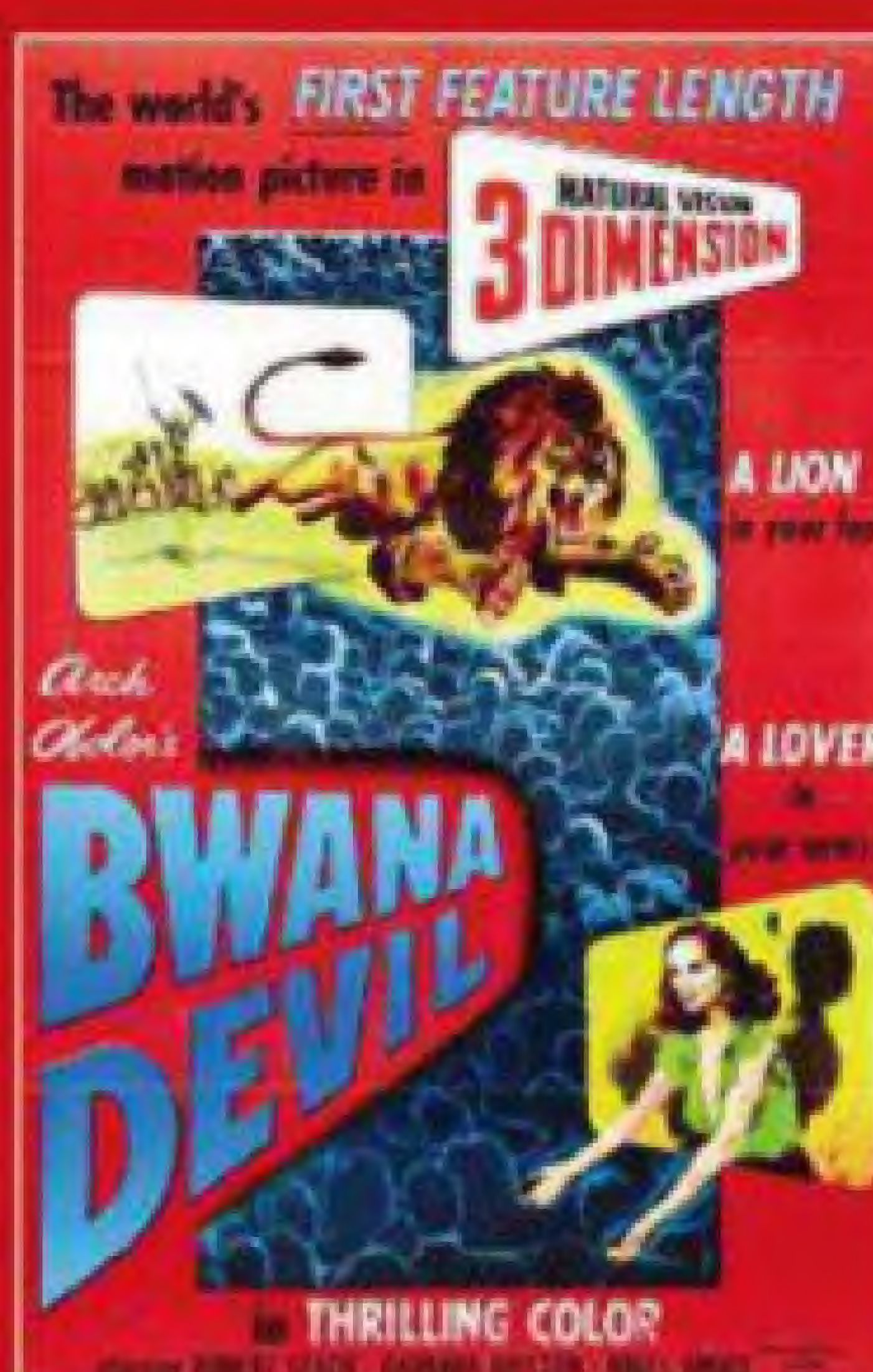
Romero was recently offered a directing gig on *The Walking Dead*.



He was really getting too old to be constantly demanding piggybacks.



The baseball game had taken a nasty turn.



Does he watch *The Walking Dead*? How about zombie porn? And just how strong are those glasses? George Romero answers your questions

Words: Jamie Graham

When *Night Of The Living Dead* shambled on to screens in 1968, George Romero animated a new breed of zombie, his Pittsburgh walking dead leaving African voodoo slaves trailing in their messy wake as they inexplicably revived to gorge on human entrails. The zombie apocalypse had descended upon us...

Romero has since returned five times to the subgenre he created. Now 72 and still churning out fresh ideas for films involving rotting-flesh adversaries, he's long been established as the Don Of The Dead. And yet he seems bemused by the whole phenomenon. "I think my films are particularly political and I'm sort of doing social satire, you know?" he says from his Toronto home. "I have to admit that I get fed up... All of a sudden there are zombies everywhere!"

Still, Romero is in fine fettle, his warmth, wit and slyly subversive asides quickly establishing why Lucas isn't the only filmmaker tagged with the affectionate sobriquet "Uncle George". "There are a lot of questions to get through?" he chuckles when advised to make himself comfortable and take a deep breath. "Well, let's get started..."

Becky Leveson, Stockport: *If you could rewind time, go back to any of the Dead films and "fix" any details you're not happy with – however big or small – what would you change?*

Well, I can't shake the concerns I have over the very first one. I look back at it now and it's really basic filming. There were 101 things that I fouled up on. Eye direction, things like that. When two characters are talking to one another, they're supposed to be looking in opposite directions so that it gives you some orientation as to who's standing where. I had people having conversations and both looking in the same direction! Basic mistake.

Craig Iversen, Wirral: *I'd love to see a Dead film that's set a long time after the zombie apocalypse – maybe 30 or 40 years later – and shows how much society has changed in the years since. Have you ever thought of doing a movie like that?*

I've had little thoughts about what if I really went *Beyond Thunderdome*, if I went to an almost barren landscape? But there were so many films like that in the '60s and '70s – these post-apocalyptic things. And I didn't like too many of them! So I didn't really feel an urge to do one of those. I don't think there would be much left and I don't want to do a world where the zombies are controlling it. That doesn't

seem plausible. I think *Land Of The Dead* is probably as far as I'll ever go into the future.

Son Of Solo, SFX forum: *I read ages ago that you were writing some novels based in your Dead universe. Was that true, or have I been sucked in by random internet lies?*

Well, there are a lot of those! But there was one point when I was trying to write a novel. I was actually trying to sell chapters of a novel on the internet. Steve King and a bunch of other authors were trying to do this at one point. So I wrote a couple of those chapters and nothing ever sold. Steve never sold anything, so we all sort of gave up! But I did have a contract, two years ago. I didn't sign it as I didn't want to be on a deadline, but I was offered a contract to write a novel and I actually started it. I was about halfway through it... And I do intend to finish it.

David Hill, Palmerston North, New Zealand: *Have you watched the Walking Dead TV series?*

I've never seen any of them! They tried to recruit me for the second season, but I didn't want to do that. I know Frankie Darabont and he's a great guy. I get mixed reviews from my friends about the series itself. I love the books – they're story-orientated,

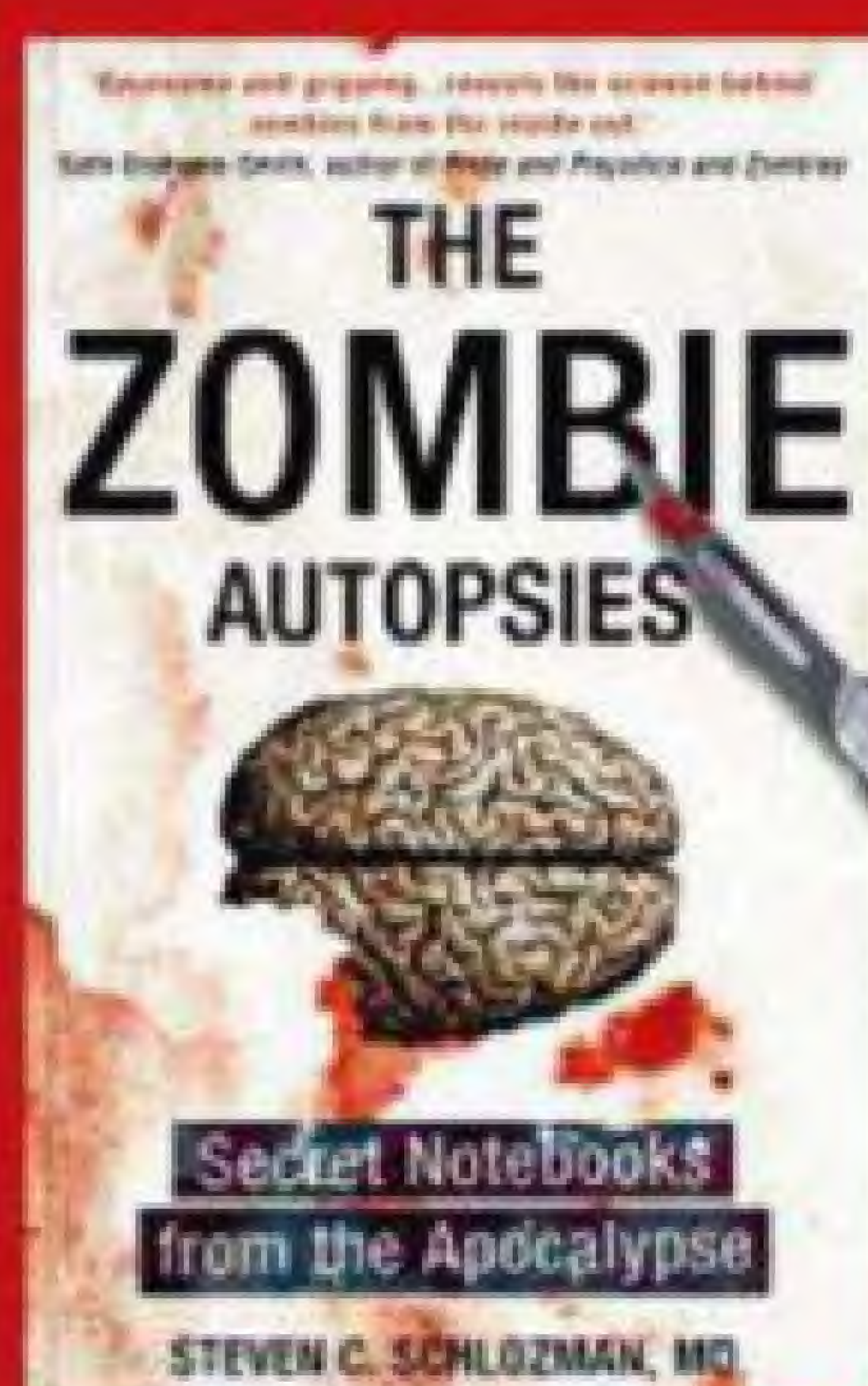


ร่างต้องเป็นขึ้น ก่อนมันจะล้ม!

DAY OF THE DEAD

คืนก่อนตาย

ลอรี คาสีร์ · ทอรี อเล็กซานเดอร์ · ไชยพิลาริ
จอร์จ เอ. โรเมโร
กำกับแสดง



people-orientated – but I just haven't wanted to watch it. Y'know, zombies are huge in pop culture [right now]. It's not surprising to me. I think any genre comes back around. Vampires are hotter than zombies right now, and who would have thought ten years ago that vampires would be hot? I'm just going to have to wait until the zombie craze dies down a little bit and sneak back in the back door, I guess!

Halit Bozdogan, Bolton: *Zombies are breaking down the door to your armoured compound. You've just run out of ammo and the futility of the situation is setting in. You've got time for one last drink, meal, song and stroll down memory lane. What are they?*

God! Well, alright... First of all it's a gin – straight gin! Song? Gosh, I don't know! Honestly, I think I'd play some classical music. I'd probably play the soundtrack from *Tales Of Hoffman* or something! Meal? Man, I guess some good ol' New York Ray's pizza. I grew up on it and I've never had a slice to equal it yet! And "memory lane"? That's a toughie. I think I'd probably want to just go back to when we were struggling to make films and we had our little community and we used to have great times. We'd sit in the editing room for 12 hours and then go down the bar and grill to drink a couple of beers and shoot the shit.

Smallbrainfield, via sfx.co.uk: *Statistically you're far more likely to be a zombie than a survivor. Do you have an outfit you'd prefer to be undead in?* Oh, Christ! I haven't written any scripts from the zombie point of view, so I don't know if they have vanity! I think, y'know, it's sort of a "come as you are" party.

Jules Frazier, Derby: *As a fellow wearer of spectacles, I've always wondered: how powerful*

is the prescription in your glasses, and how long do you think you'd last in a zombie apocalypse if they got smashed?

Well, even though my glasses are huge, my eyes have adjusted to the point where I'm actually thinking I don't need them any more! I'm thinking of going and getting some with just phony lenses. Somehow, as I got older, my eyesight improved. I don't know, mathematically, what the measurement of the early prescription was, but it wasn't particularly strong. I know that my wife has always been able to sort of see through them, so they weren't Coke bottles. The point is, now I really don't need them. I wear them to events, because whenever someone wants to do a photograph with me they always ask me to put them on. I keep them in my pocket now, ready.

Gaspar, Portugal: *Did the political overtones that critics found in Night Of The Living Dead surprise you? Was it your plan to create a discussion about these hot topics, or did they see a subtext that wasn't really there?*

I didn't know how powerful having an African-American in the lead role would be. I know that a lot of the initial articles that were written about it being a political film, a film that broke boundaries, were about that. But we didn't change the script when Duane [Jones, lead actor] agreed to do the role; the same things happened to that guy when we wrote the script and the character was white.

The race issue sort of trumped what we were trying to say about the loss of the family unit, the mistrust, and about society basically falling apart. Duane said to me one day, "You're asking me to slug a white woman? I'm gonna have to walk out of the theatre on opening night and I'm gonna get slugged!" He was much more sensitive to it. I was going, "Come on, man, it's 1968, we're meant to be past all that..."

Kera Graham, South Carolina: *Zombies are always eating, so do you think their digestive systems still work the same as the living?*

There'd be a load of fecal matter lying in the streets! I don't know. I've never gotten into that. In my novel – the novel that I'm halfway through – I started to go into that a little bit.

There's a guy named Steve Schlozman who wrote a thing called *The Zombie Autopsies*, and I'm in the middle of reading it now – I suspect that he's going to delve into the way the digestive tract of the zombie works. I've been sort of lazy about that. But of course, no one goes to the toilet in movies!

Son Of Solo, SFX forum: *How annoyed were you when you were told your Resident Evil script wasn't going to happen? I'd have loved to see your take on the game series.*

Well, the script is out there on the internet – people have brought it to me for signing! I was much more disappointed than annoyed. The Capcom people felt that my script was really great. They actually gave me sequences from the second game so that I could use them.

They thought it was terrific, but it's just not what [German film production company] Constantin, who made the film, wanted. We were working with the executives in the Hollywood branch of their company and we came up with a script, worked on it for months and months, and everybody thought it was great. Then this one guy came in and said he didn't like it.

Lozzer, via sfx.co.uk: *Have you ever watched zombie porn, George?*

Is there a subgenre of zombie porn? No! I haven't watched it. I don't think it would be much fun. I can only envision parts falling off and it not being very romantic. The flesh is not, you know, supple!

**ESCONO LA NOTTE DALLE LORO TOMBE
PER DIVORARE GLI ESSERI CHE VIVONO**



**LA NOTTE
DEI MORTI
VIVENTI**

An Italian poster for
Night Of The Living Dead

Release: StoreMags & FantaMag



George makes a point on the set of *Land Of The Dead*.



Romero ate some of this monkey's poo!

© KOBAL



Fewer people than expected had turned up for the zombie walk...



Well, wouldn't you look disappointed too if Romero dissed your film?

Kudos, SFX forum: *What's your opinion of the latest incarnation of 3D technology? Would you be happy to use it?*

I've always loved 3D. I think I was the first kid in the theatre when *Bwana Devil* – the first widely released 3D movie back in the early '50s – opened. I loved it.

I went to see *Avatar*, which I didn't like. High marks for craftsmanship and effort, but I thought it was John Ford... Only he made better films! I saw people holding their heads, taking their glasses off, not bothering to wear them. So I think there's a basic problem with it. But I think that there's also a thrill that comes with it – I'd love to do a movie in 3D.

I'd like to do a movie that's shot flat, with occasional moments of 3D. I think that would really be startling! But you'd have to wear the glasses, of course, all the time.

Kelly Harker, Kitchener, Ontario: *Have you ever been curious about what human flesh would taste like? What's the worst thing that you've ever had in your mouth?*

[Explosion of laughter] The worst thing I ever had in my mouth was monkey shit! When we were making *Monkey Shines*, the monkey was feeding grapes to [actor] Jason Beghe and to me, and he started to feed us little balls of shit! We didn't catch it quickly enough... I guess I'm curious about human flesh. Of course I'm curious. But I've never had a desire to try it, or ever had anyone who offered me anything more unusual than horse.

Montoc1701, SFX forum: *With various avenues in multimedia these days, where do you see the horror genre in ten years' time?*

I think there will always be things like *Paranormal Activity* – I have to say I didn't like it much, but again, A for effort. It had a few spooky moments; I just didn't think it went anywhere. But I think

some kids will always come along – like we did when we made *Night Of The Living Dead*, and like *The Blair Witch Project*.

Julie Mayfield, Sheffield: *Your zombies can't run, but some Olympic athlete "walkers" can move fast. What's the best speed for a zombie?*

They have to move slowly. They're basically stiff and they have to move like the Mummy – not be very secure. They move like stroke victims. The Mummy always scared the hell out of me, because it was this inexorable thing. A bullet couldn't stop it, and it just kept coming and coming and coming. It would just smash through the picture window and get you. I think there's something very scary about that, rather than rushing around. Now zombies all go out and buy Nikes the moment that they revive!

Anna Fenty, Manchester: *What's the weirdest zombie-related thing you've ever been given by a fan? (I need to know so that I can try to outdo it...)*

[Laughs] I was never sent it, but someone showed me a finger once. They claimed that it was a real finger, but I wasn't allowed enough of a glimpse to really get a look. That's weird. They were proud to show it to me, as if I somehow would have automatic respect for them!

Nick Norris, Bristol: *Is there any other genre you'd love to dabble in? A straight-out thriller? A comedy? Perhaps even a kids' film?*

I wrote a children's book once, and I'd love to do something for a young audience. It might even be scary, sort of like *Goosebumps*. And I'd love to do just a good old-fashioned jungle-adventure flick, man. The stuff that I loved when I was growing up was all about Jungle Jim and these people that took boats – schooners – down the Amazon, with poisoned darts being shot at them from both sides of the river.


I want to do one of those things. *Heart Of Darkness* without the darkness!

They didn't really stop me [making non-horror films]. I just chose to fold the tent. I said, "This is too hard." I didn't want to wind up making six films in my lifetime and fighting for each one of them. So I guess I chose the practical side of needing to pay the light bills.

Craig Oxbrow, SFX forum: *What do you think of the zombie walk craze?*

Stunning! I can't imagine why people would want to spend all that time to get all that goop on, just to bowl around for an evening. I honestly don't get it. Is it a kind of punk thing? Are they saying, "Hey man, we're cool because we're bad, we're cool because we're dead?" I don't know. I think it's sort of a craze. I guess it's like people climbing into phone booths back in the '20s, y'know? See how many people you can get in a phone booth...

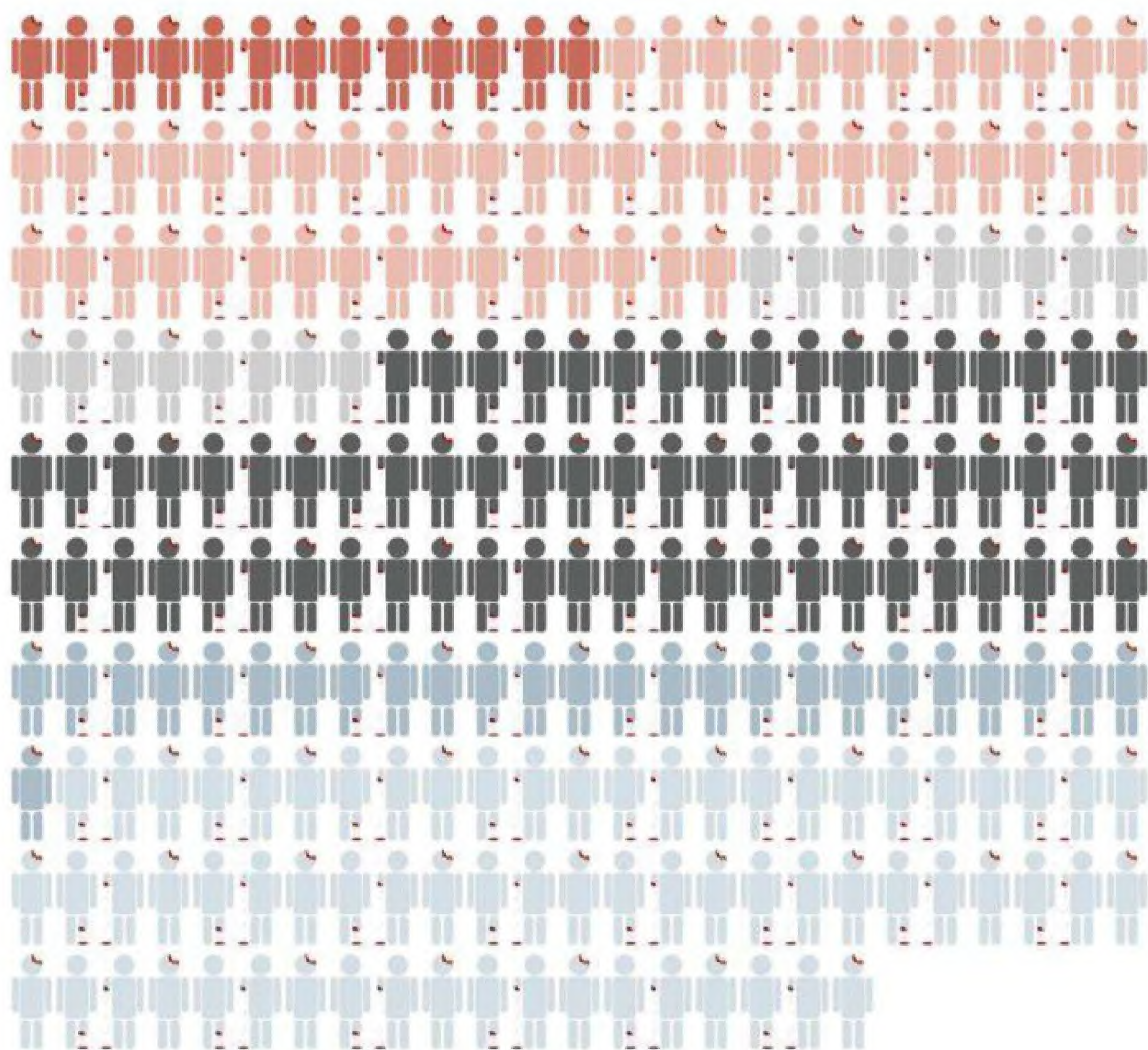
David Craven, Bolton: *Is there anyone working in horror today that you think is breaking new ground, taking innovative approaches, in the same way that you did in the '60s and '70s?*

I haven't seen too much that I think is going to bear fruit – I've seen a lot of cheesy movies. I think Guillermo Del Toro is a wonderful filmmaker, and he's got my dream career. He does one for a company store and one for himself: *Pan's Labyrinth*, *Devil's Backbone*... I really liked *Cronos*. There are moments in *Mimic*, but he went through hell with that film; there are moments in *Blade II*. I think he's the greatest. 

George Romero was the producer of '80s horror series *Tales From The Darkside*. Season one is released on DVD on 21 November by Revelation Films, and available to pre-order now through Amazon.

ROMERO BY THE NUMBERS

Statisticians: Jordan Farley/Will Salmon



244 ZOMBIE KILLS

NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD: 13 | DAWN OF THE DEAD: 53 | DAY OF THE DEAD: 17
LAND OF THE DEAD: 67 | DIARY OF THE DEAD: 26 | SURVIVAL OF THE DEAD: 68

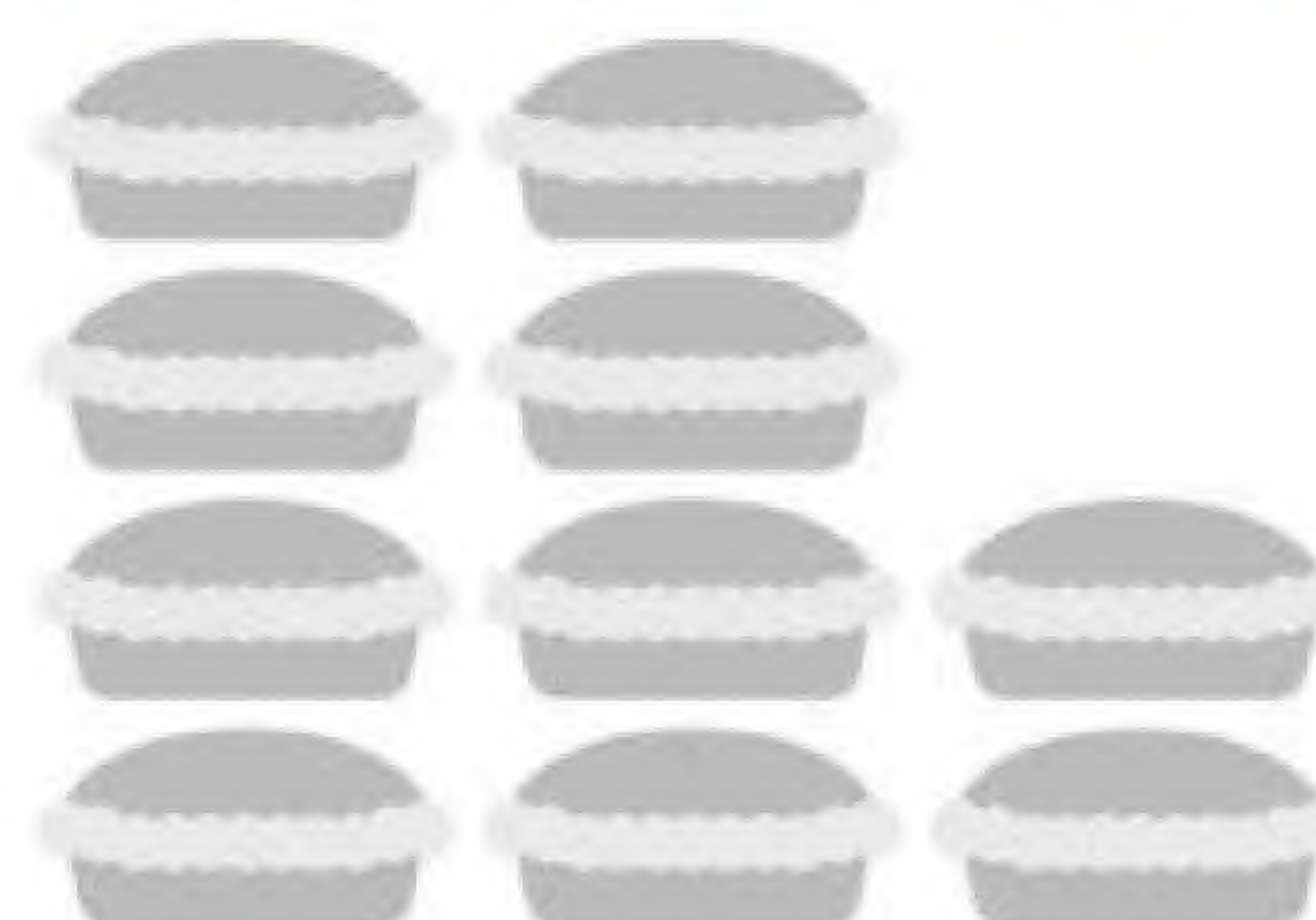
CRITERIA: CLEARLY IDENTIFIABLE ON-SCREEN KILLS



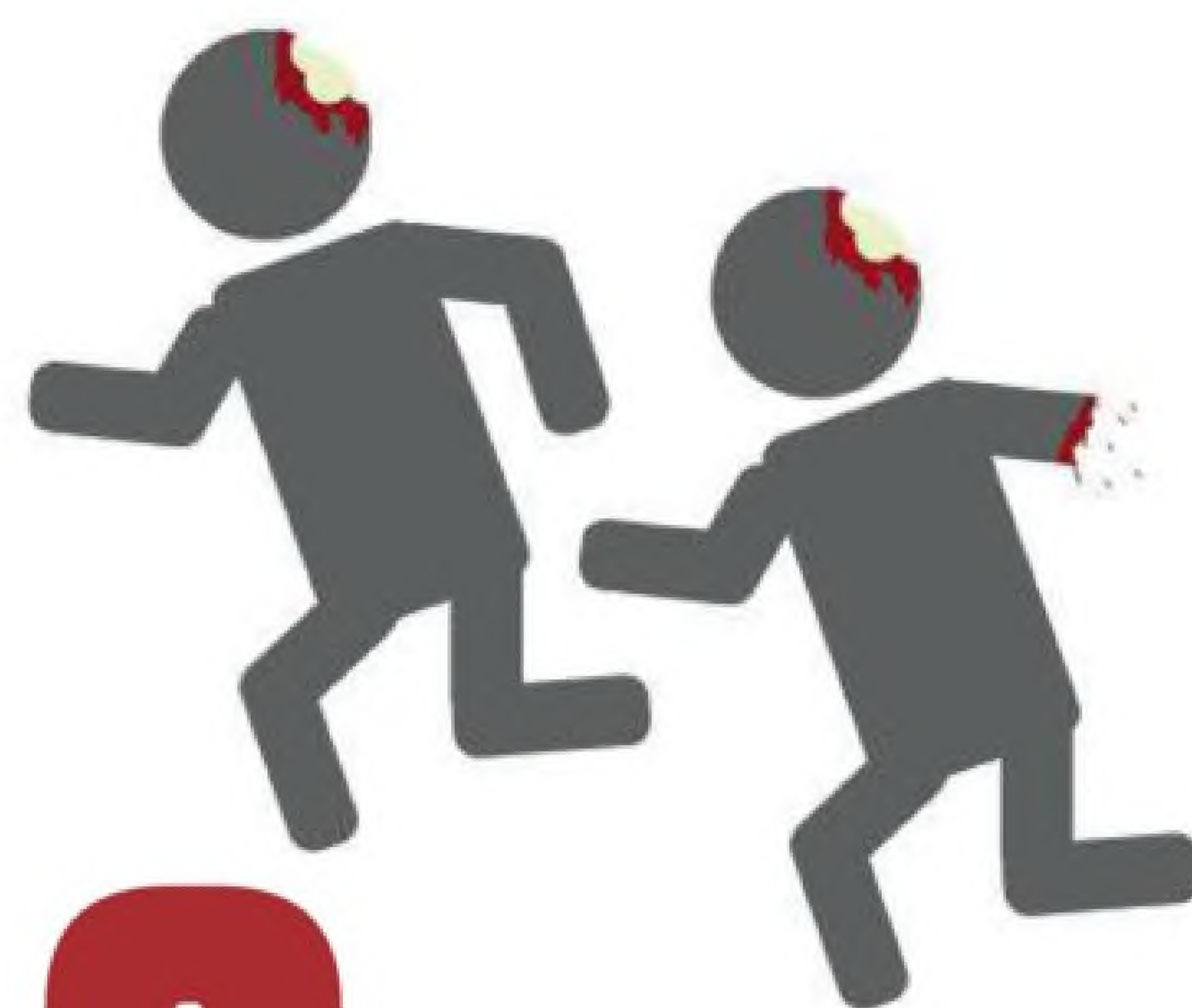
2 CAMEOS BY SIMON PEGG

A ZOMBIE IN A PHOTO BOOTH IN LAND OF THE DEAD, AND A TELEVISION NEWSREADER IN DIARY OF THE DEAD

10 PIES



THROWN BY THE BIKER GANG IN DAWN OF THE DEAD



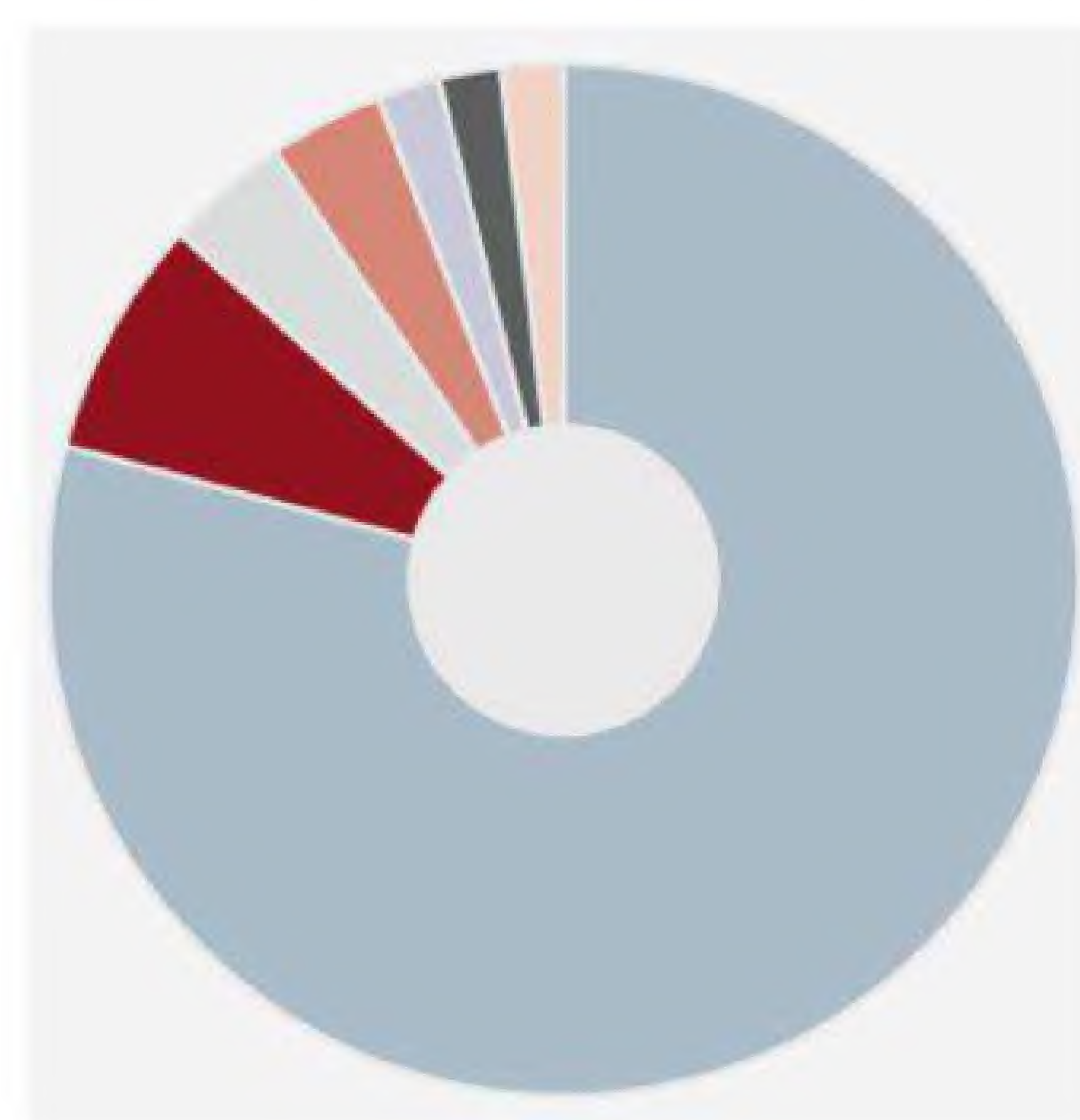
2 RUNNING ZOMBIES

THE TWO ZOMBIE KIDS IN THE AIRPORT CHART HOUSE IN DAWN OF THE DEAD ARE THE ONLY ZOMBIES SEEN TO BREAK INTO A RUN

DAY	DAY	DAY
01	02	03

3 MAXIMUM NUMBER OF DAYS IT TAKES A BITE VICTIM TO "TURN"

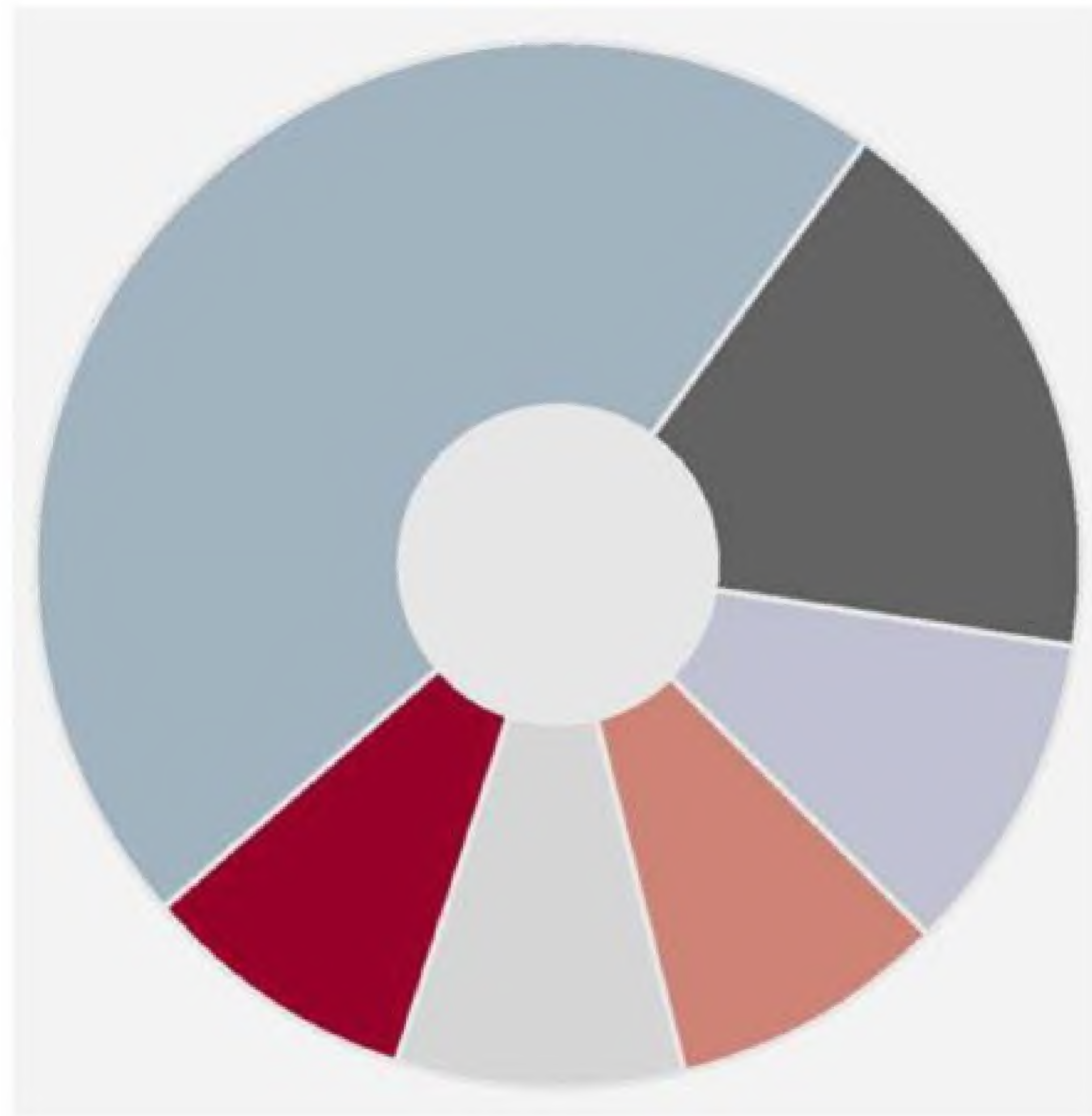
(ACCORDING TO PETER IN DAWN OF THE DEAD)



ZOMBIE-KILLING METHODS IN DAWN OF THE DEAD

GUN	42
TRUCK	4
MACHETE	2
GRENADES	2
HELICOPTER BLADES	1
HAMMER	1
SCREWDRIVER	1
TOTAL	53

3



EIGHTY ZOMBIE VICTIMS

NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD	7
DAWN OF THE DEAD	7
DAY OF THE DEAD	7
LAND OF THE DEAD	37
DIARY OF THE DEAD	14
SURVIVAL OF THE DEAD	8

CRITERIA: HUMANS CLEARLY KILLED, EATEN OR BITTEN ON-SCREEN BY ZOMBIES

CUTS OF DAWN OF THE DEAD

139 MINUTES THE "DIRECTOR'S CUT"
127 MINUTES THE THEATRICAL CUT
118 MINUTES THE DARIO ARGENTO CUT



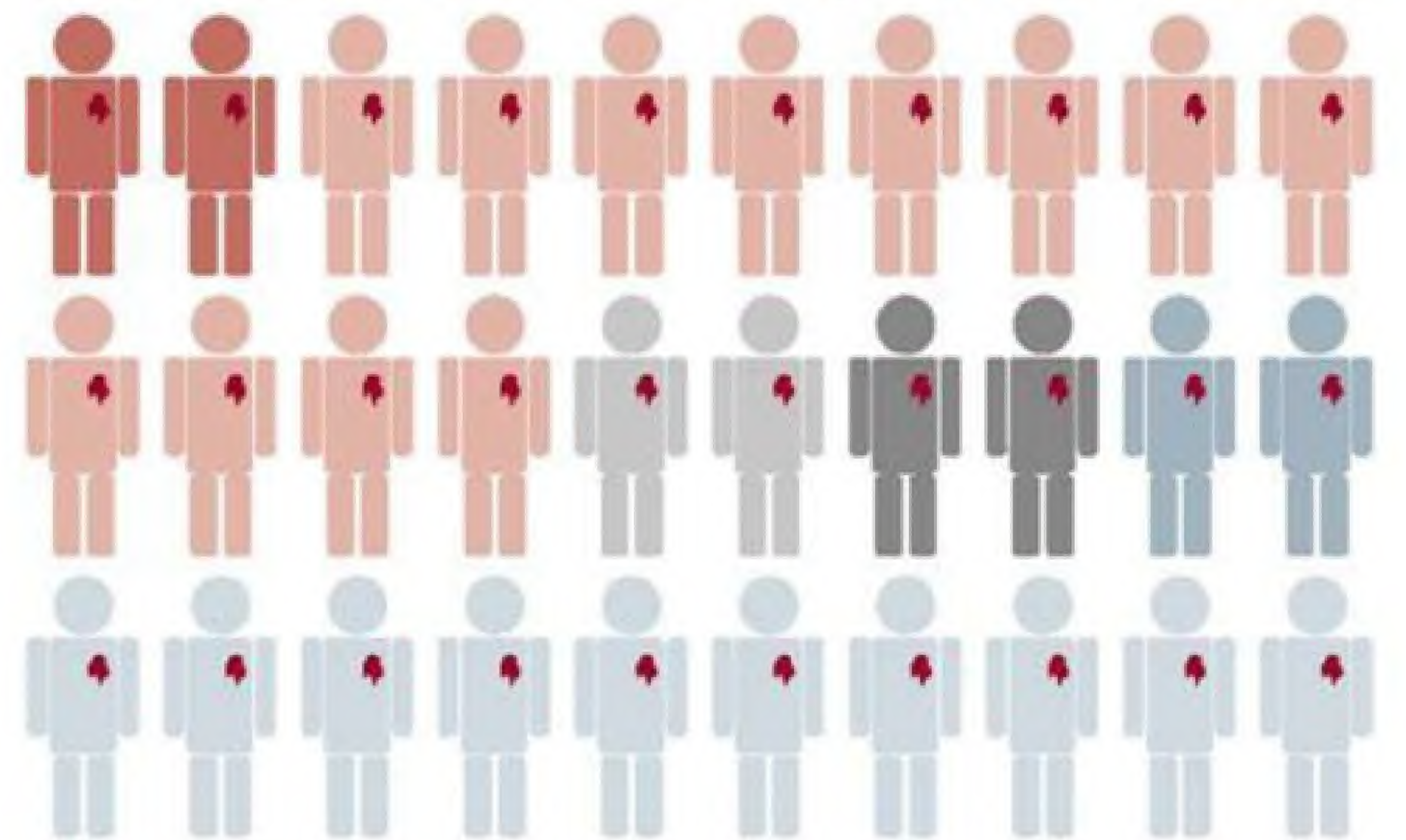
159

USES OF THE F WORD

NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD: 0 | DAWN OF THE DEAD: 2 | DAY OF THE DEAD: 32
LAND OF THE DEAD: 39 | DIARY OF THE DEAD: 73 | SURVIVAL OF THE DEAD: 13

CRITERIA: INCLUDES ALL DERIVATIVES AND VARIATIONS OF "FUCK" (INCLUDING "FUCKING", "FUCKED-UP", "DUMB FUCKS", ETC)

30 HUMAN-ON-HUMAN KILLS



NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD: 2 | DAWN OF THE DEAD: 12 | DAY OF THE DEAD: 2
LAND OF THE DEAD: 2 | DIARY OF THE DEAD: 2 | SURVIVAL OF THE DEAD: 10

CRITERIA: DELIBERATE KILLINGS OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE NOT BEEN BITTEN BY ZOMBIES (ACCIDENTAL DEATHS AND "MERCY KILLINGS" EXCLUDED)

400,000:1

ESTIMATED RATIO OF ZOMBIES TO HUMANS IN DAY OF THE DEAD

TERMS USED TO DESCRIBE ZOMBIES

11 STENCHES 6 GHOULS

12 DUMB FUCKS

2 ZOMBIES* 5 DEAD HEADS

* ONCE BY PETER IN DAWN OF THE DEAD AND ONCE BY KAUFMAN IN LAND OF THE DEAD



CAMEOS BY GEORGE ROMERO

NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD AS A REPORTER IN WASHINGTON
DAWN OF THE DEAD AS THE DIRECTOR IN THE TV STUDIO & A BIKER DRESSED AS SANTA
DAY OF THE DEAD AS A ZOMBIE PUSHING A CART DURING THE FINAL ZOMBIE FEAST
DIARY OF THE DEAD AS POLICE CHIEF ARTHUR KATZ

Just another ordinary day out
in East London then...





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I WALKED AS A ZOMBIE

What's it like to spend a day as one of the undead? **Ian Berriman** reports from the set of British zom-com *Cockneys vs Zombies*

A deserted London street. A lone, grey-faced figure shambles into view, emitting an unearthly groaning. Has some terrible apocalyptic scenario engulfed the city? Er, no, that's just me actually – six o'clock in the morning is alien territory for journalists. I'm on my way to spend the day as a zombie extra on *Cockneys vs Zombies*, a new British horror comedy toplining Michelle Ryan. The former *EastEnders* player plays one of a group of criminals whose bank job suffers a minor setback when a zombie apocalypse breaks out. That's where I come in.

06.50 Some of those lined up at the crew's UNIT base (an encampment of trailers in the shadow of Canary Wharf) are "featured zombies". They're led away to be kitted out as, say, a traffic warden. I feel a twinge of envy when one returns clutching a saxophone. Meanwhile, the rest of us are given a once-over to check that the clothes we came in are appropriate. "Are you okay to get blood on this?" I'm asked. Hell, yeah!

07.10 We board a mini-bus and are driven to an internet café/community centre in the Isle Of Dogs. Here we learn that although everyone volunteered hoping to be zombified, many will instead play

fleeing pedestrians. I feel a degree of sympathy toward those selected for this "lesser role". But mostly smugness that I'm not one of them.

07.24 There are four stages to my make-up. First, my face is sponged with a green tinge to damp down the red tones of healthy flesh. Second comes a layer of grey "corpse flesh" make-up. Next, a glob of goo's applied to my forehead and sculpted to create a wound. The blood (which smells like TCP) comes last: some dripping from the scar, more smeared about my mouth, and a final spattering with a toothbrush (how very Tony Hart). As this goes on, there's a short "how to be a zombie" instructional video to watch. The main tip I pick up concerns an authentic zombie walk. The key, apparently, is to "lift your legs from the hips and work the glutes".

Getting into character

07.44 I'm being groped by an attractive young lady wearing surgical gloves, and money hasn't even exchanged hands. I'm outside, having my clothes daubed with blood. The make-up assistant squeezes it out of a washing-up liquid bottle (ironically, since I've never looked less Morning Fresh) and randomly grabs... Ow! That's my moob! I'm asked to "make lunges" as more blood's applied. Hmm, »



Could be *Cockneys vs Zombies*.
Could be just another London riot.

maybe there's a gap in the market for a work-out video here?

08.01 I'm already *desperate* to lick my lips. Argh.

08.25 Time for zombie school. A choreographer reminds us to keep our jaws loose and our limbs limp, and drills us to let gravity do most of the work when it comes to moving: fall forwards, stumble, gather yourself up, and repeat.

08.39 We walk down to the location, Strattondale Street, where the local library's been transformed into the appropriately named Phoenix bank. A scene of carnage greets us. A half-eaten corpse lies

best fun I've had since I retired from British Bulldogs. One extra, receiving no instruction to stop, just keeps going. Her energy's so infectious that director Matthias Hoene joins in, doing a *Starsky And Hutch* roll over the back of a car.

09.20 A shot's set up of a struggling copper being dragged off the boot of a police vehicle by a pair of zombies. "I didn't hit you, did I?" the officer politely enquires afterwards.

09.26 Leaning against a bollard, I discover that it's just set dressing – a lightweight prop – by nearly falling flat on my arse.

up. I feel less of a man – until the next three volunteers prove to be equally squeamish. Phew.

10.34 Having shot some cutaways, work commences on the meat of today's scenes. The robbers exit the bank, discovering the chaos outside. Firing at the zombies, they dash to their get-away van. There are all manner of gory details. In front of me, a zombie sits on the roof of a car, chewing on a leg. Sliding off onto the ground, he drags himself along the floor in pursuit. To my right, an undead cop hauls down a fleeing pedestrian as he shins over a fence.

Staggering into action

11.01 I'm called forward for a scene that'll be rehearsed and shot from various perspectives what'll eventually seem like a thousand times. I start at the end of the road, and have to stagger forward past the half-eaten corpse and between two cars, without slipping on fake blood or tripping over the detritus on the ground. I have two zombie cops and two zombie pedestrians (one of whom has a *serious* beer belly!) staggering in front of me, and another trailing in my wake.

11.05 By the end of the first take I have a sheet of newspaper and a carrier bag glued to my foot by fake blood. One cop points out that, since I bumped into him, I may have to do so on every take. Oh shit, really? Maybe they won't use that one...

11.17 Problem: as a zombie, you can't glance around. As a result, a couple of us keep over-taking the cops, because it's hard to judge how close we are. It probably looks like I'm trying to hog the limelight.

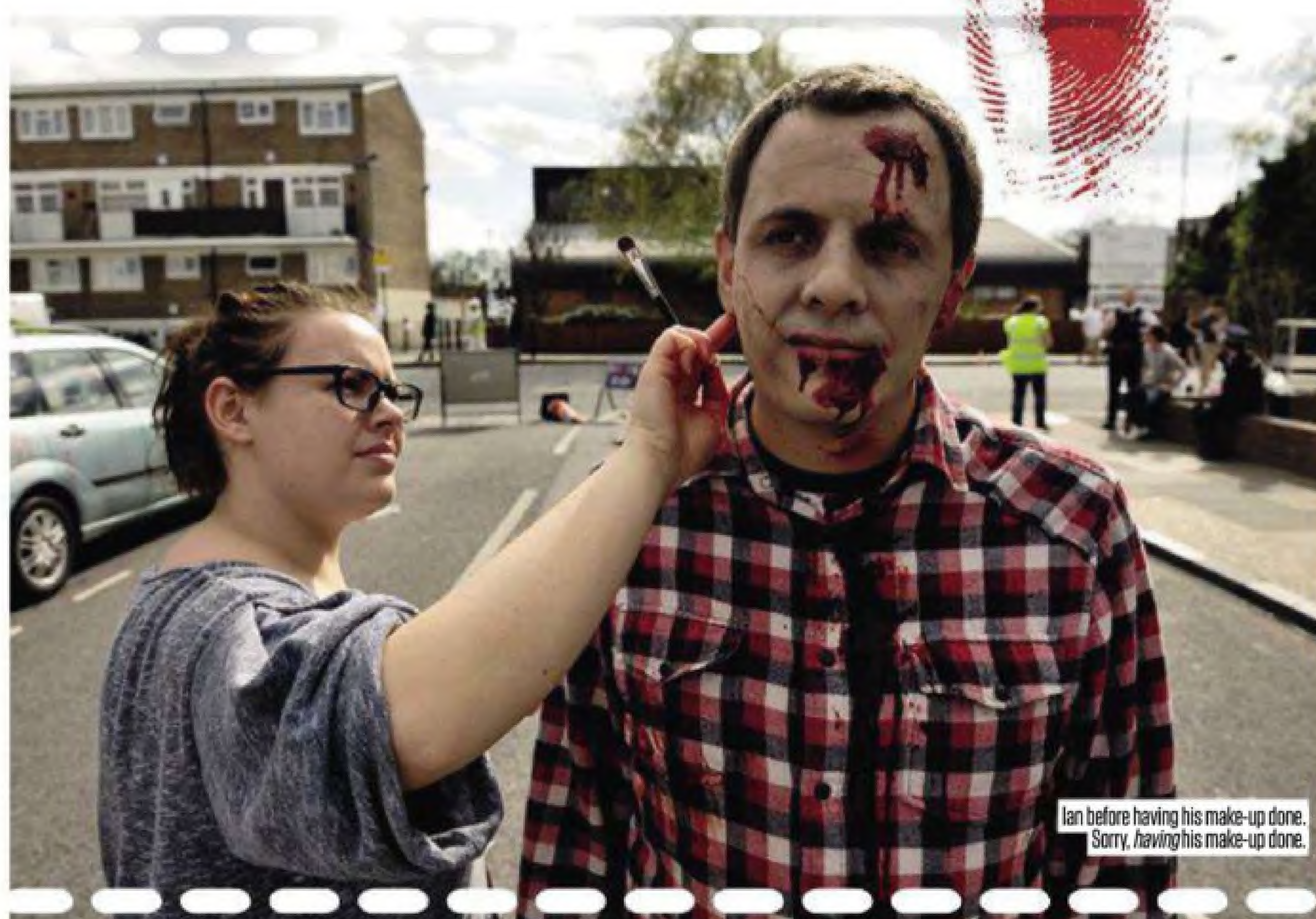
I have to stagger forward past the half-eaten corpse and between two cars, without slipping on fake blood or tripping over the detritus

in the road, trailing intestines. A crashed car pins a dummy body to a tree. A ripped-off arm clutches a hamburger. Market stalls have been trashed, their wares scattered across the road, and a crew member is smearing the boot of a police car with blood from a bucket. "I'm a northerner: this is just an average Saturday night," shrugs a fellow extra.

08.55 Our first task involves all the extras – or "SAs" (short for "supporting artistes"), as our handlers call us. A vague blur of panicking humanity is required, so we run past the camera, screaming our heads off... then tear back in the opposite direction. It's the

09.54 *Cockneys vs Zombies* writer James Moran (who also penned *Severance*) is among our number, made-up for a cameo. I observe as the undead Moran takes out a pedestrian, tipping them both over a garden wall. There may be a career for him in stunt work if the scribbling ever dries up.

10.15 "You're what's technically known as a squeezer," I'm told. A queue's formed to have white contact lenses fitted. It's not compulsory, but the results do look impressively eerie. I line up to get some but sadly I keep flinching as the lens wrangler tries to slide them in, so eventually we have to give



Ian before having his make-up done. Sorry, having his make-up done.



Scaring off the ladies – it wasn't all a new experience for Ian.



11.20 A group of primary school children gather across the street. I give them a friendly wave. “See, he’s not real!” says their teacher. It takes all my reserves of self-control not to traumatise them with a blood-curdling roar.

11.22 My left foot already aches from dragging it along the floor. I’m also regretting deciding to have my head lolling to one side in a tribute to Flyboy from *Dawn Of The Dead*, my favourite zombie – it’s giving me a serious crick in the neck.

11.25 The beer-bellied zombie picks up a severed arm. “Anyone need a hand?” he asks, then proceeds to use it as a back-scratcher.

11.47 It’s a scorcher of a day – just the sort where you don’t want to be standing in the street for hours on end – and my fake blood is drying out, so a make-up assistant freshens it up. Michelle Ryan and co have umbrellas to shelter beneath, but not us plebs. I’m grateful I’m not one of the armed-response cops, sweltering in a uniform and bullet-proof vest.

12.00 We switch to another set-up. This requires a couple of crew to be stationed to stop passers-by wandering through the back of shot. The trick, I’m told, is to be assertive: “Don’t be meek or apologetic,

and stand up straight.” It also helps to wear a hi-vis vest – people just assume you’re someone official!

12.34 We go again, from closer, this time shambling right up to the van. I’m really getting into my guttural zombie growl now, adding a sore throat to the day’s list of ailments.

12.43 The maxim that filmmaking is mostly standing around waiting is starting to ring true. It’s difficult to relax when you have to be by your mark, ready for action. There’s not much you can do, beyond sit on the concrete and read one of the week-old copies of the *Camden Gazette* blowing about the street. I amuse myself with a bit of zombie tap-dance.

An extra's life

13.07 The crew move to film a moment where one of the gang headbutts the zombie traffic warden as they climb into the van. This provides a welcome chance to chat with the other SAs. It turns out that being an extra is a great way to meet interesting, creative people – the zombie behind me is a sci-fi artist, while fence-climber and knocked-over-wall-guy are writing a sitcom together.

13.27 Back to my mark. We zombies now have to

contend with fleeing pedestrians, and smoke machines pumping out what *hopefully* aren’t carcinogenic fumes. The black stuff issuing from a silver cylinder is worst – it smells like a bonfire of every rubber tyre in the world. Hang on, though... we didn’t have smoke before, so where’s the continuity here? Realisation dawns that I may have been giving it my all earlier just to give the cast something to react to. It’s not altogether clear – as an SA, the crew’s focus is elsewhere, so you’re often left in the dark.

13.46 As panicking humans run past, I remember the instructional video: turn slowly towards the prey, swing your arm loosely from the shoulder, then grip like a vice. I feel positively triumphant when I manage to grab someone. The extra in question, Sally, has some unusual motivation for being here: zombie films “absolutely freak her out”, so she’s using today to help get over her fear!

14.00 We break for lunch. Back at the unit base, blood-drenched extras tuck into plates of paella, or stretch out on the stunt arranger’s crash mats to work on their tans. One sunbather’s using a huge lump of foam as a head-rest. He looks slimmer than



Director Matthias Hoene (headphones) poses with his zombie crew.

I remembered... I suddenly realise that the “fat zombie” has been wearing a fake silicone belly all this time!

15.30 Back in position. As onlookers gather, it’s a little like being in *The Birds*. It starts with three gawpers, but next time you turn around there are 50. Little kids in particular love it. One high-pitched voice keeps yelling, “I love zombies!” Some of their elders are more confused. “Has there been an accident?” asks one concerned old lady.

16.30 Big-belly-zombie’s gut is switched for one featuring hanging flaps of skin, and loaded with gore for a shot where he struggles to his feet after being shot. “What happened to you?” asks a curious passer-by. “Bad curry!” he quips.

16.45 “Zombies on their first positions!” comes the cry. Trouble is, after lumbering down the road from numerous starting points, what constitutes “first positions” is increasingly unclear. Unlike the actors, the SAs don’t get marks chalked on the ground. Instead, we have to work out our own system. I’ve decided my mark for this take is “level with that Timotei bottle by the kerb”.

16.49 “Somebody shoot that dog!” a crew member shouts as a barking canine delays another take. I’m not 100% sure he’s joking.

Actors vs squirrels

16.59 East London squirrels are *hardcore*. One is sneaking up on the half-eaten corpse. Having decided the carcass can’t be stripped for food, the bushy-tailed intruder spends several minutes dashing about under police cars and sniffing at scattered Corn Flakes. Eventually, bounding up to the library entrance, it attracts the attention of actor (and rapper) Ashley “Bashy” Thomas... who lifts up his gun, roars, and chases it down the street!

17.45 I’ve no idea how much of my thespian genius was captured this morning, but I should definitely be visible in the takes we’re doing now – well, if I can be seen through the dry ice. “More smoke!” screams the director, as billowing clouds pour out. “The whole point is that the zombies come through the smoke!” He rushes in to move the smoke machine nearer, furiously wafting it around.

18.03 This take’s a nightmare. As I stagger past the half-eaten corpse, a huge lump of guts sticks to the bottom of my shoe. What do I do? Would a zombie scrape it off? Terrified of being the guy who ruins the take by shaking his leg, I stumble on, trying not




After a long day’s filming, Ian felt, well... like a zombie.

to grimace as I swallow a mouthful of black smoke. It all seems worth it, though, when the director mutters, “Good walking, good acting.” My chest swells with pride. Or is it that I need to heave?

18.23 The crew’s packing equipment away, but there are still shots to get in the can. They’re filming in front of the van now, as it drives off. We must stagger along behind, as we can be glimpsed through the back windows. Knowing we’re barely visible, it’s tempting to put in a half-arsed performance, but me and my undead brethren still give it our all. It’s the arm-chewing zombie, still dragging himself along the road, that I pity. “I feel like I’ve crawled across half of London,” he sighs.

18.49 I question the cops. One’s been working occasionally as an SA for 11 years. “It’s like birthdays for me,” he says. “It comes around so seldom that I forget how painful it is!” Another puts our suffering into perspective by revealing that he had one of the titular roles in *The Human Centipede 2*. Blimey, imagine spending all day with your mouth stuck to someone’s arse... (Insert your own Nick Clegg joke here.)

19.03 After one final stagger, during which the camera moves amongst us, spinning around, it’s a wrap. We wearily tramp back to the community centre and gather out front to wash off our make-up. I discover an unexpected upside to being a zombie extra – well, for budding metrosexuals at least. “You look like you’ve had a facial and a spray tan!” someone declares.

19.15 I’m dead on my feet. My neck aches, my throat tastes of burnt rubber, my brain has been cooked by the sun, and I can barely remember how to walk like a human being. I’ve discovered that being an extra is tougher than you might think, requiring patience, humility and huge reserves of stamina. The chances are that I’ll only be glimpsed for a split second in the finished film, but I don’t care – I’ll always be able to say that I was one of the living dead. If you ever get the opportunity to join their number, sling out an undead arm, seize it, and grip like a vice. 

Cockneys vs Zombies will be released by Optimum some time in 2012.

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Foreword by Rob Zombie

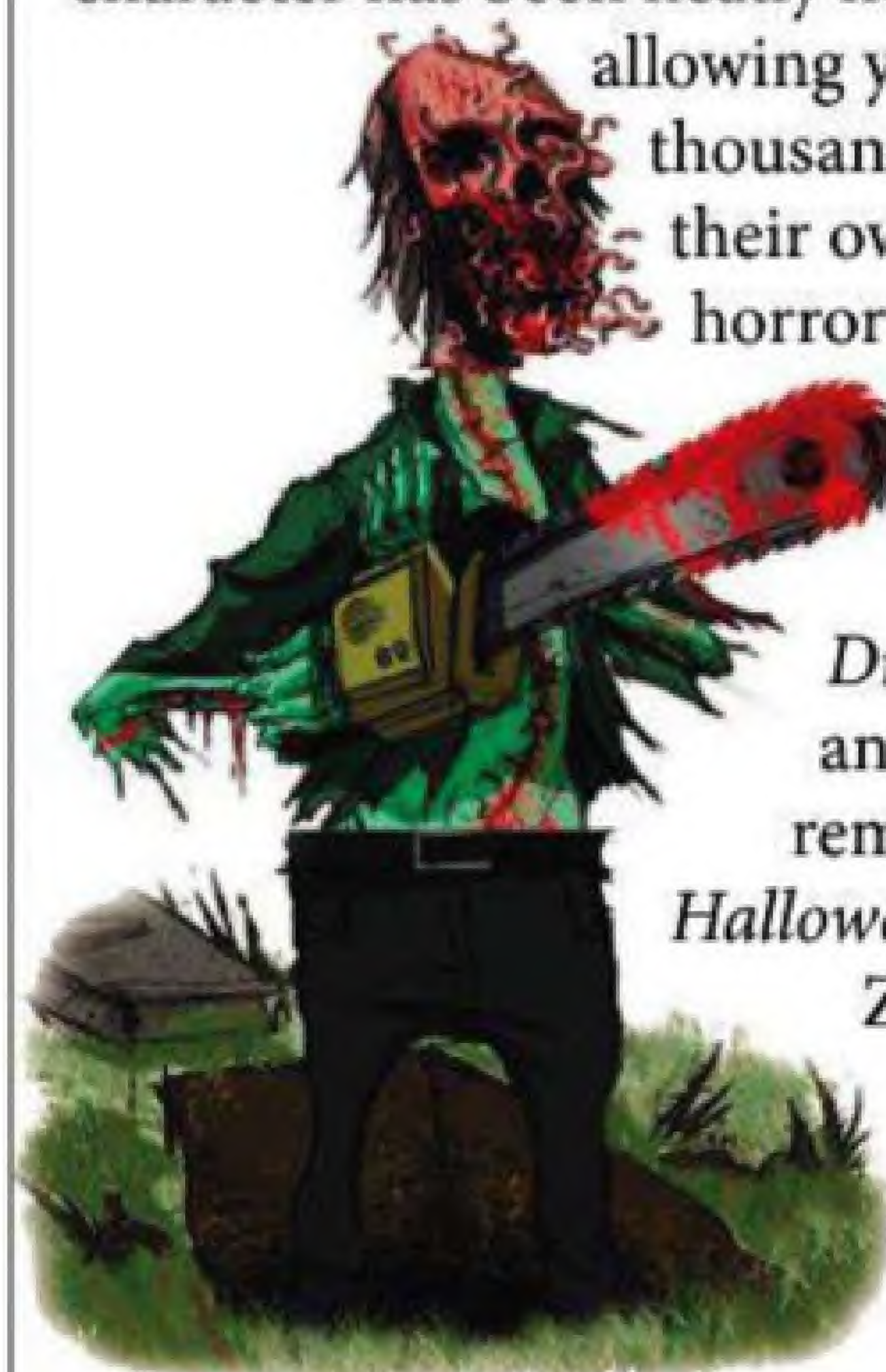
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DAVID MOODY

The author of the *Autumn* series tells Ian Berriman why his zombies don't feast on the living

When you try to do something a little different from the norm, it won't necessarily meet with universal approval. That's something the author of the *Autumn* series, which makes several innovative tweaks to the classic zombie template, knows all too well. "It can be frustrating when you spend an age writing these things and then somebody comes along and will just churn out something that's more formulaic," David Moody admits. "You see the five-star reviews building up on Amazon and you think, 'What have I done wrong?'"

Not that the books haven't been a success. The story of how the series sold is almost as interesting as that of the books themselves. Moody made *Autumn* available for free online; more than half a million downloads later, he had a following. Sequels *Autumn: The City* and *Autumn: Purification* were sold online, before traditional publishers signed him. Book four, *Autumn: Disintegration*, gets a UK release in December.

Set your expectations accordingly, though. Pick up the *Autumn* books hoping for non-stop, gung-ho action and you're unlikely to have your bloodlust sated – partly as a result of Moody's desire for realism.

"I really wanted to write a zombie novel that was believable," Moody explains. "So I thought I'd get rid of the more extreme aspects of the mythos. I'm not the slightest bit religious – I don't have any belief in God, devils or demons – so the whole voodoo explanation was straight out of the window and it was down to germs or radiation, the kind of things Romero hinted at in the original *Night Of The Living Dead*."

But the biggest change that Moody made – despite being a Romero fan – was to drop the "flesh-eating" from "flesh-eating ghouls". "That's the one thing that's never really made any sense to me," Moody says. "It was just such an obvious plot device. Why would these things that had reanimated do that? They don't stop for a drink, they don't lie down for a sleep, they don't go to the toilet! So why would they stop and eat? You can say that it's to pass on the infection, but to me it just seems really clumsy, so I thought I'd rather do without that altogether."

Moody says this creative choice has earned him a fair amount of stick. "There are quite a few vocal people in America who aren't best pleased when they don't get their pound of flesh –

quite literally!" he laughs. "There are some who completely get the wrong end of the stick, and just seize on the book because it's not what they were expecting. I was reminded of it the other day. I watched *Monsters* and thought it was brilliant. Then my daughter and her boyfriend watched it, and her boyfriend was saying, 'It was a terrible film – there were no monsters in it!' I said, 'But that's not the point! It's a story about people and how they bond and get on.' 'Yeah, but I wanted monsters!'"

Moody's walking dead do attack humans, but their aggression comes from a different place. They also have an arc, of sorts. After most of the population drops dead, it takes several days before the dead rise. Initially, they're harmless, not even registering the presence of the living, but gradually they become more capable – and more of a threat.

"I didn't want the zombies to be completely dreary," Moody explains. "In a lot of films, the zombies you get in the first scene are exactly the same as the zombies you get at the end, and I wanted there to be some progression going on."

"That's why, over the course of the books, the dead start to gain a level of self-awareness. But at the same time their bodies are deteriorating, so there's this weird paradox where they're getting more intellectually able, but more physically disabled. Really, their reaction to the living is the only reaction that they

can possibly have – it's a kind of frustration."

The characterisation of the survivors is also refreshingly different. In movies, it's pretty common to see people quickly coming together and drawing up plans. In *Autumn*, it's a good 100 pages before two people have a meaningful conversation, and bickering is more common than consensus. Does that reflect a pessimistic view of humanity or a desire for realism?

"It's a bit of both," the author says. "You hear people saying, 'Oh, when it happens I'm gonna go to this warehouse, clear it out, get myself some guns, find a safe house...' but I think the reality is that most people would think, 'Oh shit!' and just hide under their duvet! The people in *Autumn* do end up clearing out a warehouse and getting weapons, but it doesn't happen immediately."

"I knew there was a possibility that it could turn out to be a long series, and I wanted to stagger that progression throughout, rather than have it all happening at the start. There was a definite, intentional reluctance for everybody to get on and team up to fight the dead, because I don't think that would happen."

"Zombies don't stop for a drink; they don't lie down for a sleep; they don't go to the toilet – so why would they stop to eat flesh?"



MOODY MOVIES

The *Autumn* author's branching out into film

David Moody's already had experience of the world of movie making, albeit indirectly. *Autumn* was made into a 2009 film starring Dexter Fletcher, and the first book of his other ongoing series, *Hater*, has been optioned by Universal (with Guillermo del Toro attached as a producer). However, what he really wants is to get behind the camera himself.

"I'm a frustrated filmmaker", Moody confesses. "I had absolutely no experience, so when I left school I ended up working in a bank, but I always wanted to make films. I didn't have a way in, so I started writing books instead, but I've always had the desire to go back and look at screenplay writing and then directing." Fingers crossed, he should make his first tentative steps into the world of cinema some time in 2012.

"Next year we're hopefully putting together a short film with a music video director in Colchester. It's already written. It's not labelled *Autumn*, but it's an *Autumn* kind of thing. If that works out okay we'll look to make another couple and put it out as a feature. It's just testing the water a little bit."

Moody got his break after self-publishing online, and he's convinced that a similarly DIY approach will become increasingly commonplace with movies.

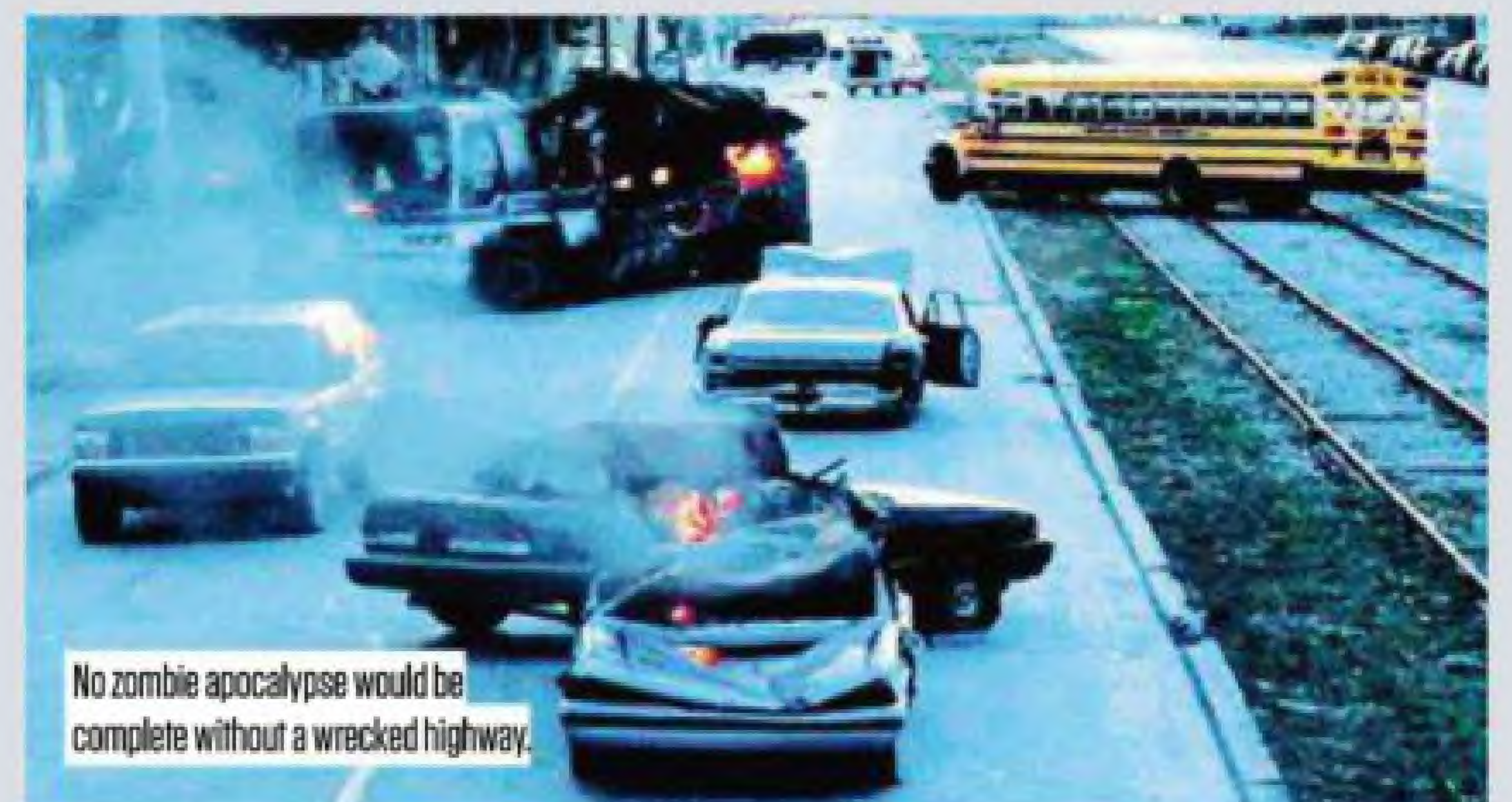
"I really think film is gonna go through the same thing that books went through in the last 10 years, and that means that anybody will be able to get out there and compete. I bought a camcorder for my holiday last year which cost me a couple of hundred quid, and it shoots in full high definition, and Apple have just launched their new version of their editing software, which is what the major studios use, and it costs maybe \$300. So the technology is there now."



The late David Carradine gets up close and personal in *Autumn*.



Thinking about the undead makes Dexter look worried.



No zombie apocalypse would be complete without a wrecked highway.

The way people *do* behave can be neatly summed up in three words: they're very British. "Definitely!" Moody agrees. "We're a nation of grumblers and queuers, and people who are happy to moan about things but not actually do a lot. Yeah, the reactions of the survivors are stereotypically British – stiff upper-lip and all that; despite the fact that everybody else is dead and our world's fallen to pieces, let's not be too public with our emotions!"

"I do think there's a big difference between how people would react in different countries, so if the opportunity came to write an *Autumn* book set elsewhere, the behaviour of the characters from day one would be very different. You write about what you know, though, and when I wrote *Autumn* I hadn't been out of the country. So really it was just based on my experiences and the situation I was in."

Very literally, in fact. The titular setting of book two – *The City* – is never named outright, but anyone who's spent much time in Moody's hometown of Birmingham will probably recognise bits and pieces of it.

"The building at the start of *The City*, where a character wakes up to find everybody has died around her, is the McLaren building (35 Dale End, B4 7LF – Birmingham Geography Ed) where I used to work for HSBC. That's actually where I wrote the third book. We were made redundant and given something stupid like 14 months' notice, which meant we were sitting around twiddling our thumbs for a year, on full pay. It was great for me, because I got on and wrote *Purification*!"

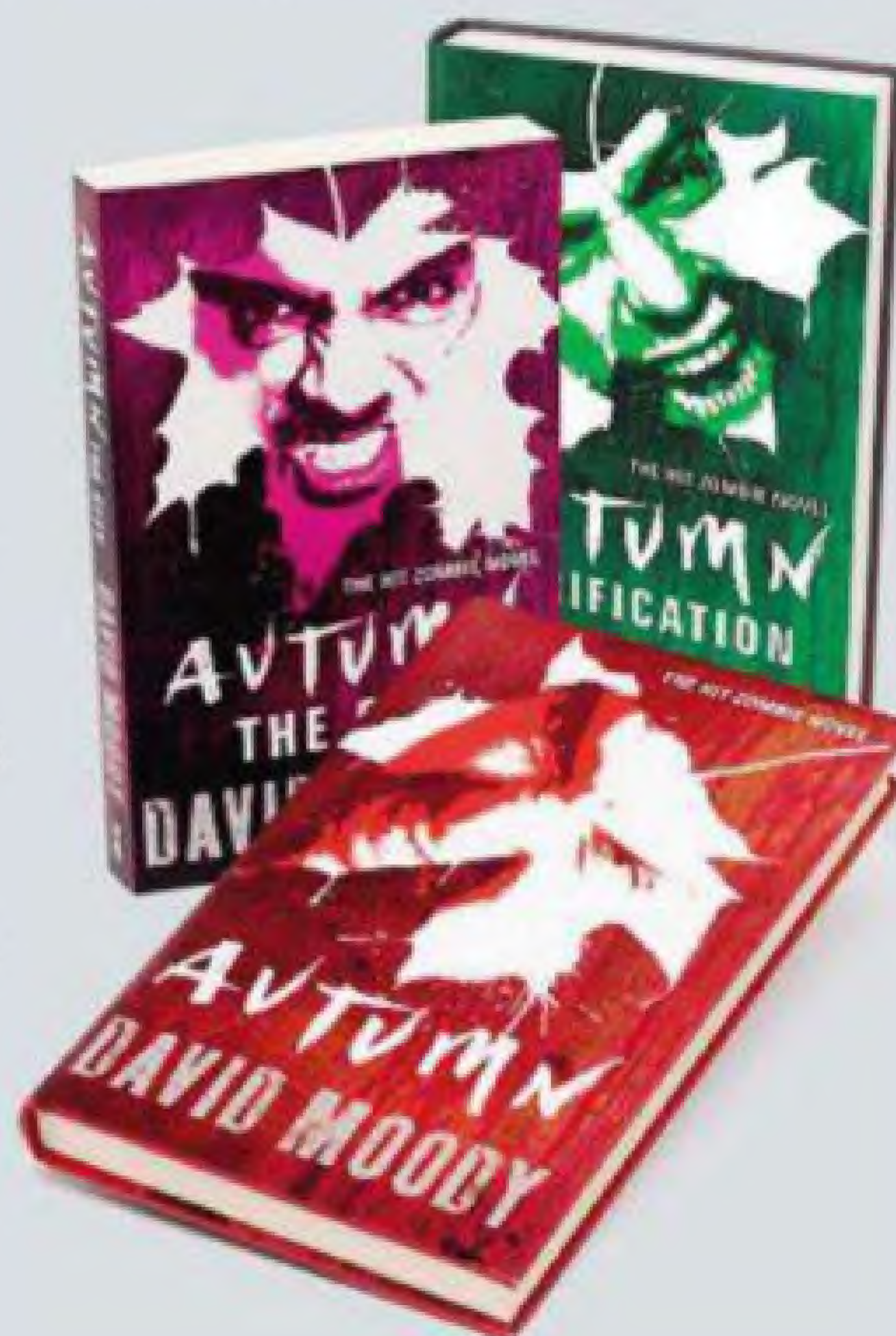
The fourth book in the series, *Autumn: Disintegration*, should please some of Moody's critics more than the initial trilogy. "That was kind of written as a response to the people that didn't really get *Autumn* and couldn't understand why they weren't kicking zombie ass.

"The premise is that there's a group in an abandoned block of flats in an inner-city area who are surrounded by the dead, but they're going out and getting whatever the hell they want. Then circumstances result in them ending up with another group who've survived the other way – by keeping quiet and doing it good. So there's conflict between these two groups: both have managed to make it that far, but when they're together, what's the best way forward?"

After that, a fifth book, *Aftermath* – currently slated for release in October 2012 – will finally see a full stop being put on the series. "It's kind of a post-zombie novel," Moody reveals. "There aren't many dead in it because we're four, five months down the line. All my research said that in about six months the bodies would be pretty much just goo and bones. So again, putting my plausible hat on I thought, 'What would happen if that was the case and you've got a world that's coated in this once-human sludge? How would the people that are left get on then?' So *Aftermath* is looking to the future and asking, 'Can it have a hopeful ending?' I think it's gonna be the most upbeat of all the books."

As to what the future has in store – well, we'll just have to wait and see. If Moody does continue his chronicling of the undead, however, you can bet your bottom dollar that he won't be pandering too much to the constituency that simply want to see zombies getting both barrels in the brain.

"A lot of people think zombie fiction is an easy game, because all you've got to do is chuck in a few lumbering corpses and some blood, but I couldn't physically write something like that. I think I'd start, get a few pages into the gore, then be back to emotions again!"

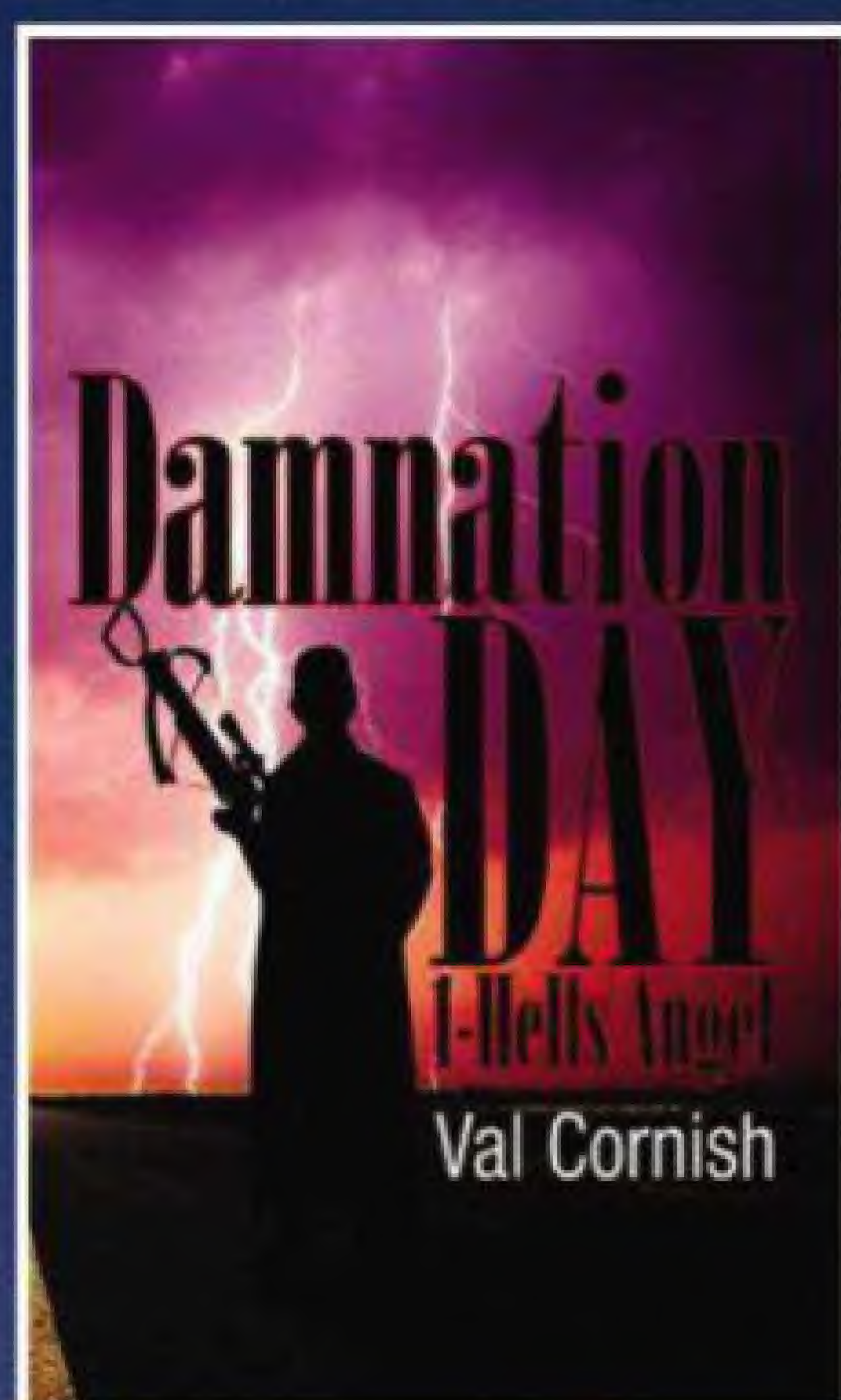


Autumn: Disintegration is due for release on 29 December, from Gollancz. Turn to page 110 now to read an original short story by the author!

WELCOME TO MY WORLD(S)

Damnation Day 1 – Hell's Angel (ISBN 978-1-907040-23-8) – available in paperback from Amazon and all good book stores and on Kindle from Amazon Kindle Store.

No one claimed to have started it, or to know how it started, but to those who live in the post-apocalyptic world and call it 'hell on earth', it is of secondary importance. All that matters is to survive, any way/any how. The main character, Angelus, is a product of the world in which he lives: a loner, a messenger of sorts travelling between one settlement and another, trading and surviving as best he can in a world where the climate is as violent and hostile as some of those who inhabit it. But Angelus has secrets.... The discoveries he makes on his journeys, both about the world in which he lives and about himself form the basis of the Damnation Day quartet. So, as Angelus says, 'Welcome to my world'.



NEW
Damnation Day 2 – Games People Play (ISBN 978-0-9569342-0-8) available through Amazon Kindle Store

Games people play takes up where Hell's Angel leaves off, and finds Angelus trying to get his life in order following Dante's 'revelation'. However, his attempts at domesticity don't last for long and he's soon back on the road along with his reluctantly acquired companions. Not unsurprisingly, Angelus is soon in trouble, both political and domestic.... coming soon to paperback through sellers such as Amazon, Waterstones, W.H. Smith and Barnes and Noble.

Welcome to Purgatory (ISBN 1-905226-95-0) – available in paperback from all good bookstores

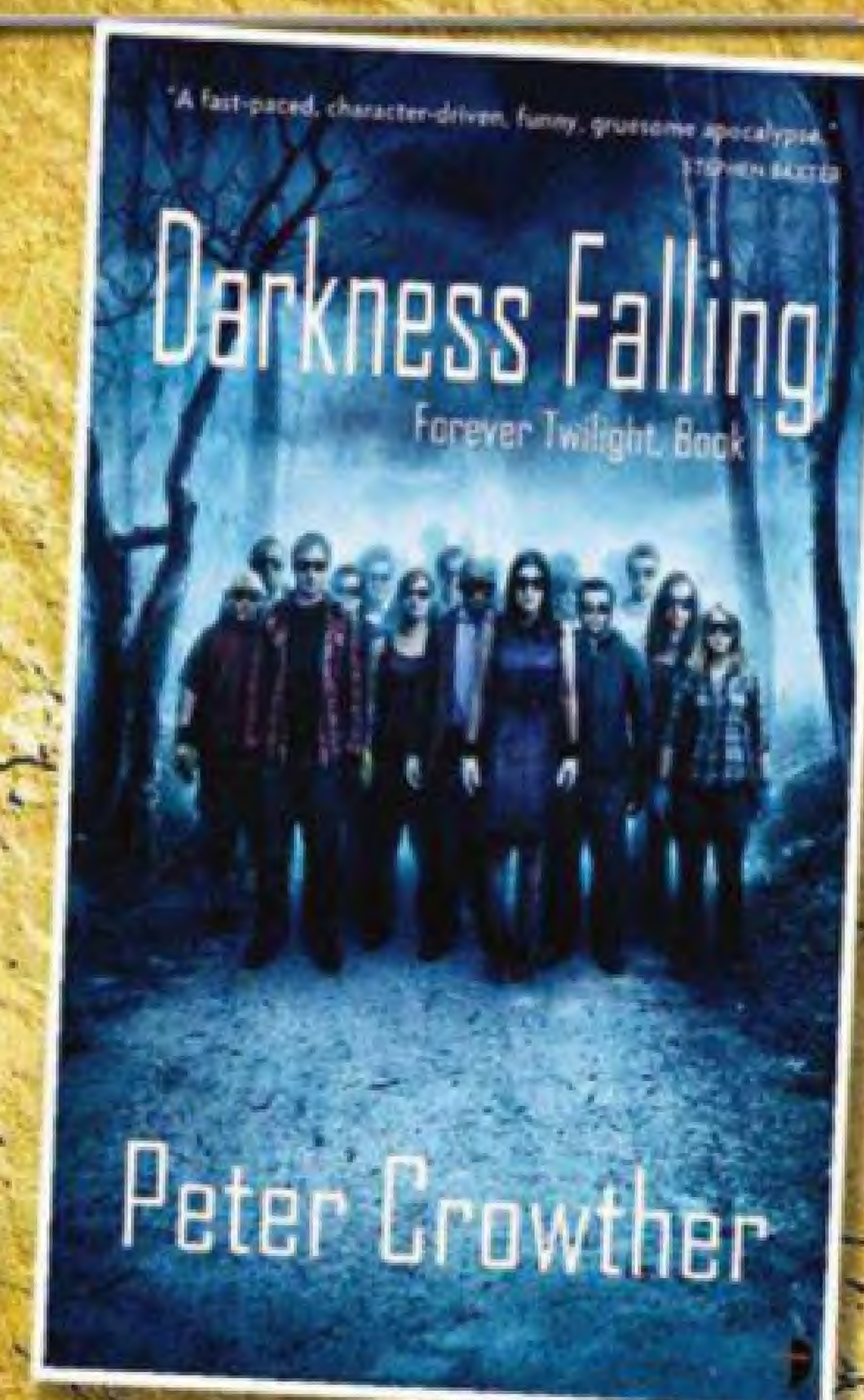
Littered with concepts that are contradictory to the traditional view, Welcome to Purgatory is a clever and unusual story that turns our accepted perception of Heaven and Hell on its head – not all in Heaven is good and not all in Hell is bad. Super-sexy Lucifer, Lord of the Lower Domain (Hell) and Purgatory (neutral ground), is by no means perfect but his heart is in the right place and he will never turn his back on those that care for him. He finds himself in a desperate struggle to stop his mother destroying everything in her quest to punish him for not toeing her line. His mother is Gaia, First Lady of the Upper Domain (Heaven), who is an unstable megalomaniac determined to control her husband and sons, punishing them severely if they rebel.



ANGRY ROBOT

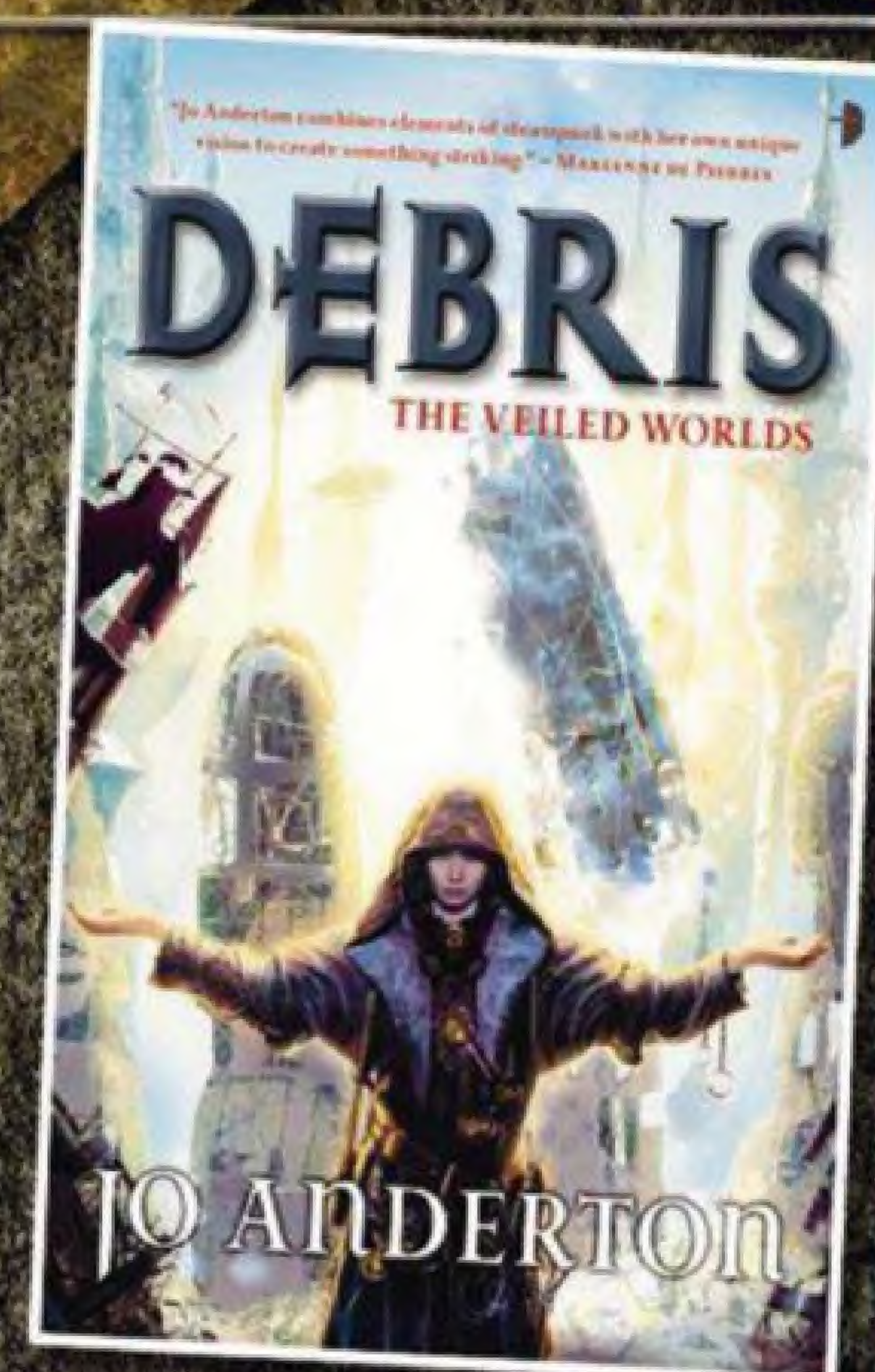
SUBJECT: THEY'RE HEEEE-EEERRRE

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Tom Savini

The man who made George Romero's living dead walk tells **Calum Waddell** about his career among the corpses

Ask any self-respecting fear-film fanatic to name the world's number one zombie creator and they'll probably answer "Tom Savini". This, after all, is the make-up effects magician who conjured the colourful carnage of 1978's *Dawn Of The Dead* and its 1985 follow-up *Day Of The Dead*, both still considered the benchmarks by which every other contemporary flesh-chewing contender is judged. Nicknamed the King of Splatter by his fans – thanks to a CV that also includes such gore-drenched delirium as *Friday The 13th* and *Creepshow* – Savini has, in recent years, moved in front of the camera as a recognisable bit-part actor. However, when *SFX* catches up with him, the good-humoured 64-year-old proves more than happy to go on a trip down memory lane – and to discuss how best to dispatch a zombie.

New ways of killing

"Uh... that's a good question!" he laughs. "I'm not sure I have actually found the best way of killing a zombie yet. You see, I'm not totally retired from special effects. There has been some talk about me

doing a remake of *Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things*, and I would love to do that. Maybe then I can start thinking about the best way of killing a zombie. I still think there's some ground to be broken as far as that sort of thing goes!"

For those unaware, *Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things* is a Canadian zombie creeper from 1973 that was directed by the late Bob Clark.

people to realise that these corpses have been dead for years, or even decades."

Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things also has a connection with beginnings of Savini's career. It wasn't Romero who gave the effects wizard his first stab at all things zombie-related. In fact, it was 1974's *Deathdream* – made by the same crew as *Children* – that introduced Savini to the

"Day Of The Dead was a trial-and-error experience, attempting things that had never been done on screen before"

The film is largely a cash-in on George Romero's original *Night Of The Living Dead*.

"If I work on this new remake then I think I'll do a mixture of CGI and the real thing," says Savini. "I would like to subtract from people's faces, create holes through their faces and stuff – I think that's the next evolution in zombie make-up. I want to actually see zombies rotting away. I want to see *inside* them, and *through* them, y'know? I want

world of the living dead. In this low-budget classic, a young soldier shot dead in Vietnam returns home as a shambling carcass, tearing the throats from those around him and decomposing from the inside out.

"*Deathdream* was my very first film in any capacity," Savini explains. "I contributed some ideas to the zombie make-up but it was a guy called Alan Ormsby who was in charge of the special effects. We only had one zombie in that film, of course, »



Blind man's buff, for all eternity.



Savini got his first break in make-up on 1972's *Deathdream*.



Savini didn't enjoy directing the 1990 *NOTLD* remake.

From *Dusk Till... er, no, it's Savini's* similar look in *Land Of The Dead*.



“I would like to subtract from zombies’ faces, create holes and stuff – I want people to realise that these corpses have been dead for years”

and it was played by an actor called Richard Backus, who was really smart. I told him that I was taking some of my influence on the designs from being in Vietnam – because I had served as a photographer out there – and he was really interested in that.”

It was with 1978's *Dawn Of The Dead*, however, that Savini really hit career pay-dirt: cementing himself as horror's top special effects hero and instigating the rash of Romero rip-offs that soon followed.

Gut-eating excess

“At the time it was crazy to try and do what we did,” he laughs. “It was a trial-and-error experience because we were attempting things that had never been done on the screen before – such as when I sunk a machete in a zombie's head, or the sequence where a helicopter blade tears away the top of a guy's skull. But it was fun coming up with that stuff.”

“I remember when it came out, a lot of people got upset over the scene where you see these two zombie kids being shot. I was surprised that that was the moment in *Dawn Of The Dead* that seemed to cause the most trouble – I think they even removed it in the UK for a while. The funny thing is that they were actually my niece and nephew!”

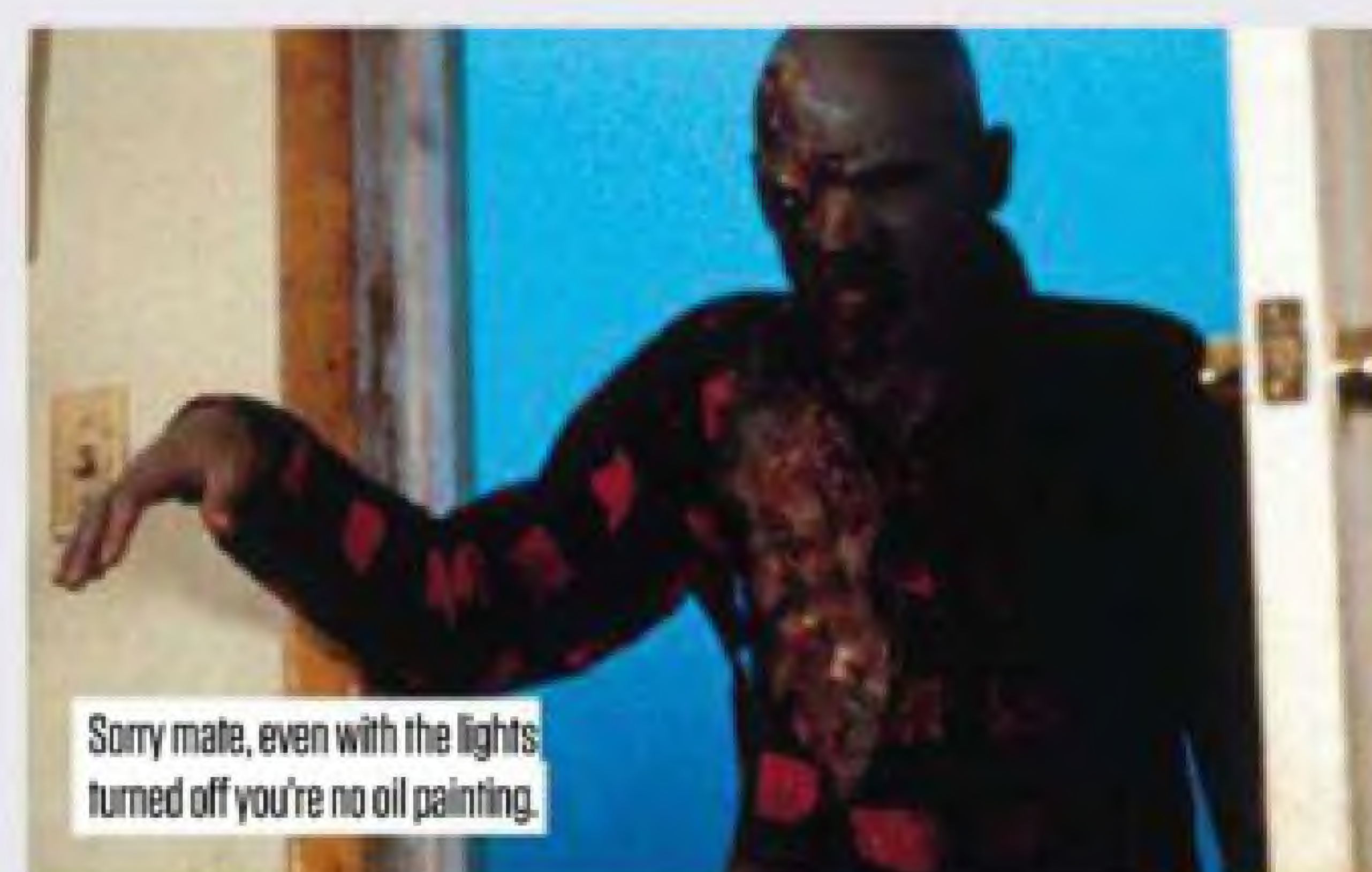
Following *Dawn Of The Dead*, zombies were

everywhere – although it was largely the Italians and the Spanish that got in on the act; the Americans were largely staying away from the gut-eating excess inspired by Romero and Savini. So by the time *Day Of The Dead* was released in 1985, Stateside audiences were understandably excited about the return of the real thing. Unfortunately, however, the end result was a box office disaster.

“It's my favourite of the *Dead* films, and it's George's favourite too,” says Savini. “The budget was cut and we couldn't produce the movie that we'd originally planned. However, I think the end result still holds up. We put a lot into it and it was a very tough shoot.”

Much of the filming took place in a mine in downtown Pittsburgh, which didn't exactly make for pleasant working conditions.

“Being in that mine was really difficult: when you blew your nose your snot would be black. It's no wonder that the crew kept getting ill! I'd come home from working on *Day Of The Dead* and the first thing I'd do was jump in the shower. You just felt dirty working in those conditions – and that's captured in the movie, which is grim and claustrophobic. After a month we were all psychologically disturbed. So I can sort of understand why *Day Of The Dead* was too dark and depressing for people.”



Sorry mate, even with the lights turned off you're no oil painting.

Unleashed during the same year that brought audiences the light-hearted *Re-Animator* and *The Return Of The Living Dead*, *Day Of The Dead* more than holds its own and, with truly disgusting zombie disembowelments and decapitations, boasts effects work that is arguably Academy Award-worthy.

“I did get a Saturn Award for *Day Of The Dead*, but there's no way you'll get an Oscar for a film like that!” laughs Savini. “Unfortunately, they don't tend to gravitate towards horror movies – but *Day Of The Dead* does contain Bub the zombie, which is one of my favourite creations. I think, as far as my effects go, the make-up design on that character is what I'm most proud of. It's such a step up from anything in *Dawn Of The Dead*.”

Although *Day* flopping temporarily put a dampener on Romero's zombie career, it didn't prevent Savini from dabbling with the dead for too long. Come 1990 he had moved onto directing his first full-length feature film: a remake of Romero's 1968 *Night Of The Living Dead*. Bolstered by old pros



Sometimes being popular
can get a bit intense...



such as Romero himself (on screenwriting and producing duties), in addition to original *Night* alumni John Russo and Russell Streiner (both co-producing), on paper it appeared to be a can't-lose proposition...

Big problems

"It was the worst experience of my life," groans Savini. "After a few days I didn't want to be there. It's a miracle that, in the final film, what's up there is up there. I couldn't wait for the birds to start chirping in the morning so that sound takes would become impossible and I could go back to my hotel and forget all about it.

"The big problem was that George wasn't there to keep an eye on things," he continues. "He was in Florida writing his movie *The Dark Half*. However, I was assured that John Russo and Russ Streiner were not going to be there and they were. They had a lot of suggestions that I didn't like and they kept slapping my hand, telling me

there was not enough time to do this and that, and we clashed a lot. I'd come from directing episodes of the *Tales From The Darkside* television series, where I had complete freedom, whereas on *Night* I had to fight for everything."

Rumours have circulated that, perhaps somewhere in bootleg heaven, there exists a yet-to-be-seen director's cut.

"Yeah, I imagine my original cut of it is out there somewhere," teases Savini. "But I doubt you will ever see it. I think it would cost too much to go to the bother of putting it all back together again. That movie is about 30% of what I intended to do, which is why I included in my book, *Grande Illusions*, the storyboards of the scenes that I wasn't allowed to shoot."

The passing of time, however, has mellowed Savini's opinion of his *Night* revamp.


"I hated the movie for a long time," he says. "But I recently went to a midnight screening of it and I have to say that it has held up well. The acting

is terrific and it feels a little like a sequel to the other Romero movies. I think that it's probably one of the better remakes."

Aside from a cameo in the *Land Of The Dead*, Savini was absent from Romero's last three *Dead* films. He is, however, more than happy to offer an opinion on them.

"I did like *Diary Of The Dead*," he reveals. "I was surprised that George knew so much about Twitter and YouTube and all of that. I've not seen *Survival Of The Dead* yet, but I was less impressed by *Land Of The Dead*. I always thought you were supposed to kill zombies, not lead them off to the promised land!"

And as for the future? It seems that once a zombie creator, always a zombie creator...

"I was watching the stuff that Greg Nicotero has been doing on *The Walking Dead*," admits Savini. "It was so good that it got me to thinking, 'Wow, I really have to try and do something new.' So I think you'll see me back in action before long..." 

THE A TO Z OF ZOMBIE VIDEO

A is for **ACCOUNTANCY**

In the words of Benjamin Franklin, there are only two things we can be sure of in this world: death and taxes. *Zombie Accountant* on the Xbox Live Indie Games marketplace is the only game that features both of them. Of course, in the event of a zombie apocalypse, taxes will probably be the last thing on your mind – but you can be sure that a visit from a zombie HM Revenue wouldn't stop at the shirt on your back...



B is for **BLOOD AND BRAINS**

It's important that you desensitise yourself to the colour of blood before you begin your fight. Sadly, certain countries are extremely funny about the colour of blood in their local releases of games, and as zombie games usually tend to have quite a lot of it, this has led to some problematic releases. Germany, for instance, won't allow any ketchup in their releases, meaning that *Wolfenstein's* guards leaked green slime instead. Australia went even further, banning *Left 4 Dead 2* until images of "decapitation, dismemberment, wound details and piles of dead bodies" were removed.

GAMES

Videogames have taught us countless lessons about surviving the zombie apocalypse. **Jon Hamblin** collects their teachings

C is for COWBOYS AND CORPSES

But what if you come face to face with the undead while living in the Wild West? In *Red Dead Redemption: Undead Nightmare*, cowboy John Marston found the town of Blackwater overrun with these flesh-eating parasites, and had to clean up the town with nothing but a six-shooter, a shotgun and a steady diet of baked beans. Marston realised that the best way to keep ahead of the undead was by travelling light, an idea later taken to its logical extreme by Aya (of *Onechanbara* fame), who fought them wearing nothing but a cowboy hat and a bikini!



D is for DAFFODIL DEFENCE

You probably already have a safehouse in mind for when the zombie apocalypse kicks off. But according to *Plants Vs Zombies*, you might be better off hiding in the *Blue Peter* garden. Apparently, mutant flowers could be grown to combat the undead menace, and a front line of pea shooters, mashed potato landmines and cherry bombs will be enough to keep monsters from your front door. While we'd never want to dissuade someone from mad horticultural experiments, we're not convinced that an army of darkness will be polite enough to form such orderly queues on your lawn of the dead.





E is for EDDIE STUBBS

The star of *Stubbs The Zombie*, Eddie Stubbs was a travelling salesman in the wrong place at the wrong time. After his unfortunate death in Punchbowl, Pennsylvania, he rose again, like a wrathful Willy Loman, ready to exact his revenge in a chirpy retro-futuristic '50s setting. They say that to kill your prey, you have to know your prey, and Stubbs is notable for being one of the few games that shows you the conflict from the zombie's point of view. Control Stubbs. Get a feel for his motivations. Just don't develop his fondness for braaiiiiins.

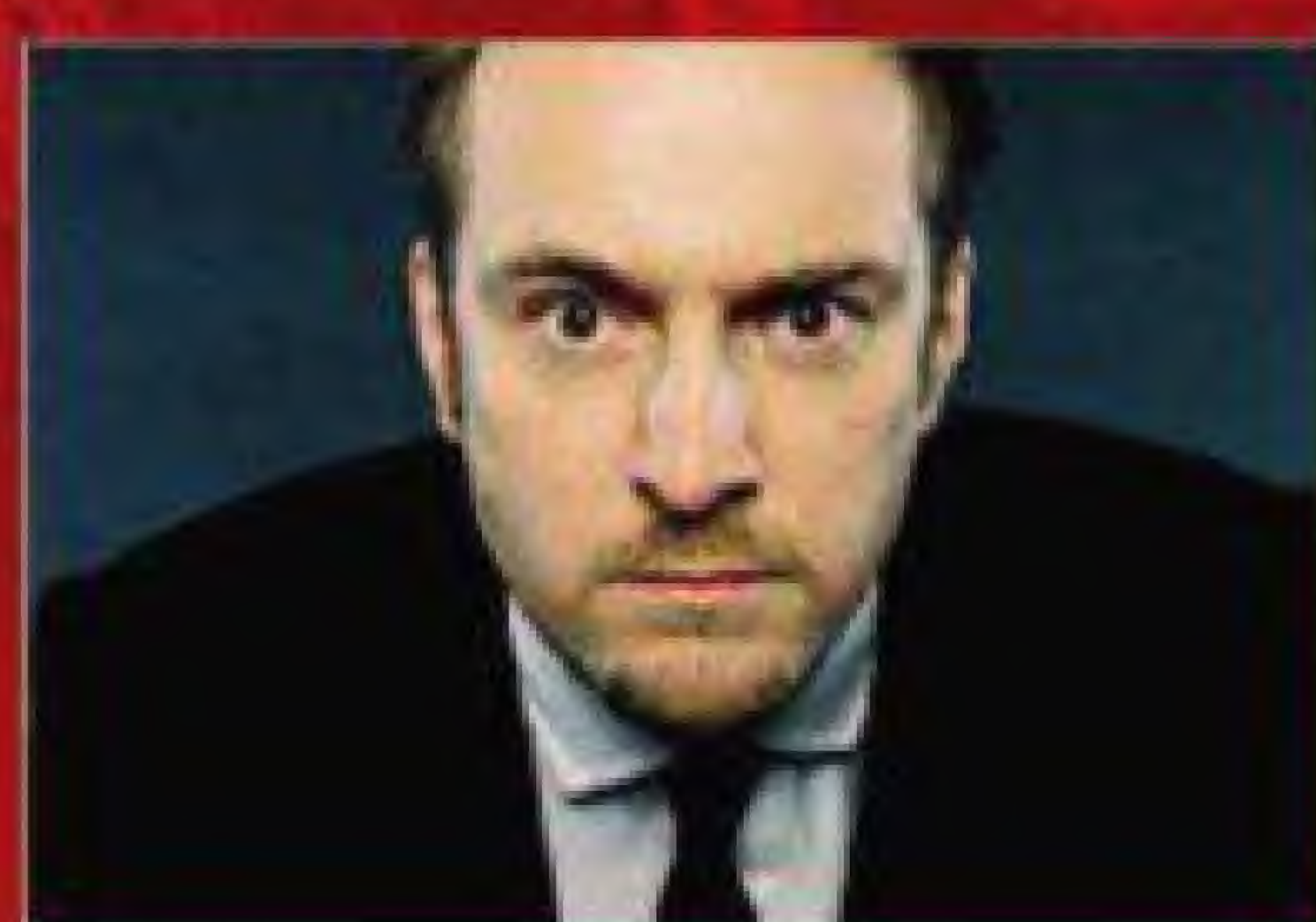
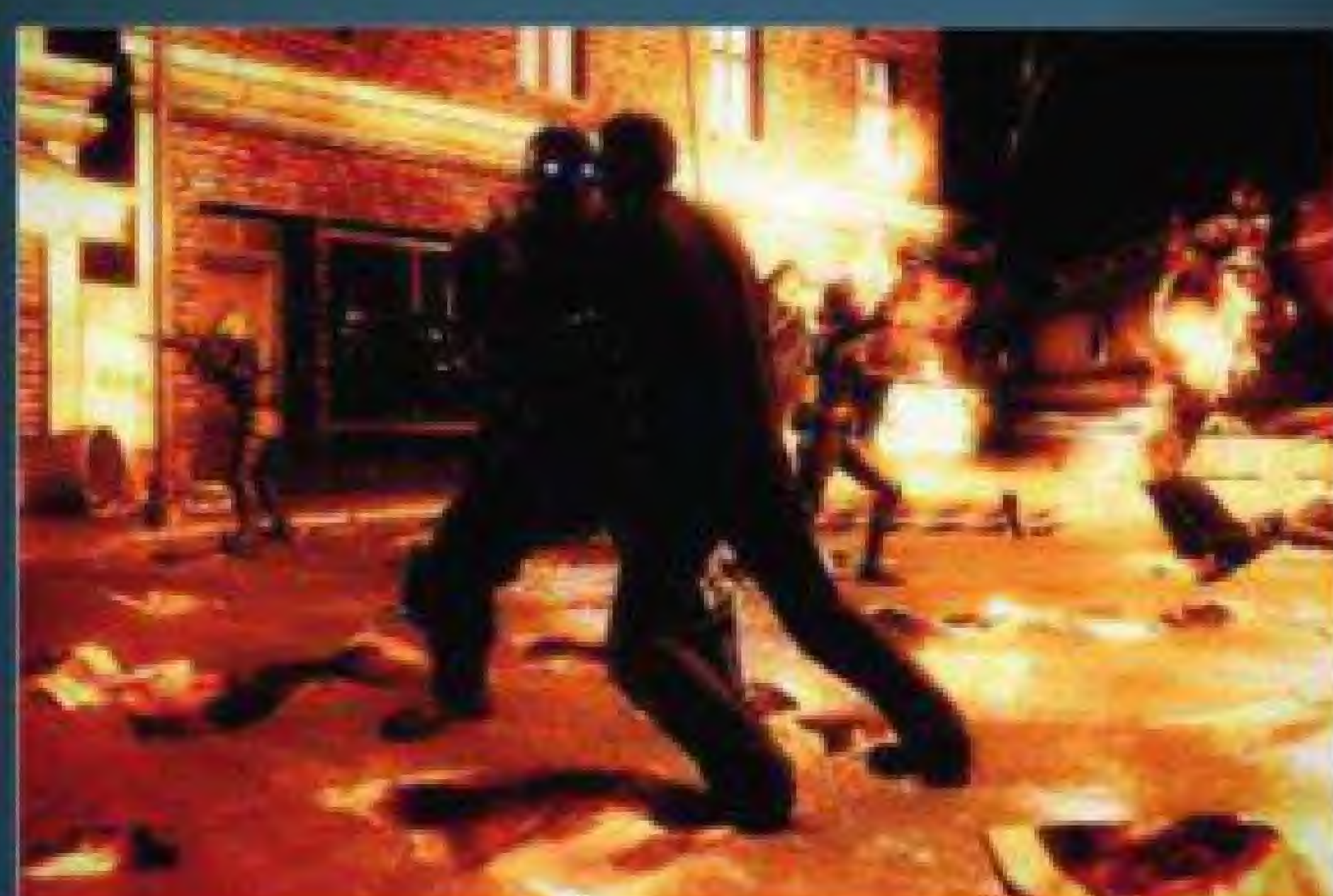
F is for FRANK WEST

Frank taught us that even zombies can offer magic moments. The protagonist of Capcom's *Dead Rising*, West was a photojournalist trapped in a shopping mall with nothing but a bunch of psychos and corpses for company. Luckily, the zombies made great models, and by the end of his adventures, West had taken enough gory snaps to fill an entire Flickr account.



G is for GEORGE ROMERO

Can we rely on videogames to tell us the truth about what a zombie invasion would really be like? We can certainly rely on them to tell us what a zombie invasion directed by George Romero would be like. The *Resident Evil* series was the first to pay heavy dues to Romero's aesthetic, to the extent that Romero even ended up directing the Japanese commercial for the second game. Sadly, Romero didn't end up directing the later movie adaptation, after his script was deemed to be too different from the game – which makes you wonder why they subsequently greenlit Paul WS Anderson's Bizarro-world interpretation.



H is HYPNOTISM

Waking Dead, a zombie light-gun game created for a Derren Brown stunt, sent

players into a catatonic state; then they were transported to a "real-life" zombie-infested building and had to fight their way out. Horrifically cruel, this *Trick Of The Mind* episode only showed hypnosis to be a powerful tool for humiliation, and that most people are pretty feeble-minded. That being so, when you finish this sentence you will feel compelled to send a cheque for £5 to the following address: (snip! – Ed)



I is for ISLANDS

It's all very well having joy and fun during your seasons in the sun, but if your tropical resort becomes overtaken by zombies, getting to a sunbed before the Germans is going to be the least of your worries. The good news is, there are always lots of machetes lying about on tropical islands – the bad news is, zombie videogames set on islands tend to be rubbish (*Isle Of The Dead* received 0 stars when reviewed in *Dragon* magazine in 1994, for example). *Dead Island* has turned the tide, though, and its shotguns and swimwear paradise is ideal for those who like their training with a totally tropical taste.

J is for JILL VALENTINE

She may have just been a rookie member of the STARS team that first investigated the Raccoon City outbreak, but after appearing in numerous *Resident Evil* titles, Jill can teach us one lesson about tackling ghouls: it's apparently very important to wear short skirts.



K is for KAISER STIFFS

What's worse than a zombie? All together: "A NAZI ZOMBIE!" That's right. Fortunately, US Marine BJ Blazkowicz repeatedly thwarted the World War 2 corpse-raising antics of the SS Paranormal Division in the *Wolfenstein* series, so goose-stepping ghouls probably won't be a problem for you.





L is for LIGHT GUN

If you're going to be looking down the sights of a Desert Eagle before blowing away Auntie Jean's rotting corpse, you'd better learn how to shoot. Maybe that's why we've had so many zombie-themed arcade games that feature pink plastic light guns – games companies have been paid off by shadowy government agencies to create training simulators for civilians. Or it might just be that it's far more acceptable to blow people's limbs off when they're already dead. Either way, games such as *Area 51*, *Beast Busters* and Sega's *House Of The Dead* series all featured plenty of zombie cannon-fodder, with the *Grindhouse*-themed *House of the Dead: Overkill* probably being the best.

M is for MAVIS BEACON

Many games can claim to improve your chances of survival in the inevitable zombie apocalypse, but only one claims that it can improve your words-per-minute count. *Typing Of The Dead* was a modification of the *House Of The Dead* light-gun arcade game that swapped plastic pistols for beige PC keyboards, in which you had to dispatch zombies by typing the words above their heads as fast as possible. On harder difficulty modes you had to rattle in some very oddball phrases – typing "I love you" to blow a hole in a corpse's cranium is just plain cruel.



N is for NEIGHBOURS (AND THE EATING OF THEM)

One of the things you'll have to come to terms with is that zombies have probably already eaten your neighbours. This lesson was most clearly stated in the LucasArts SNES game *Zombies Ate My Neighbors*.



O is for OCARINA

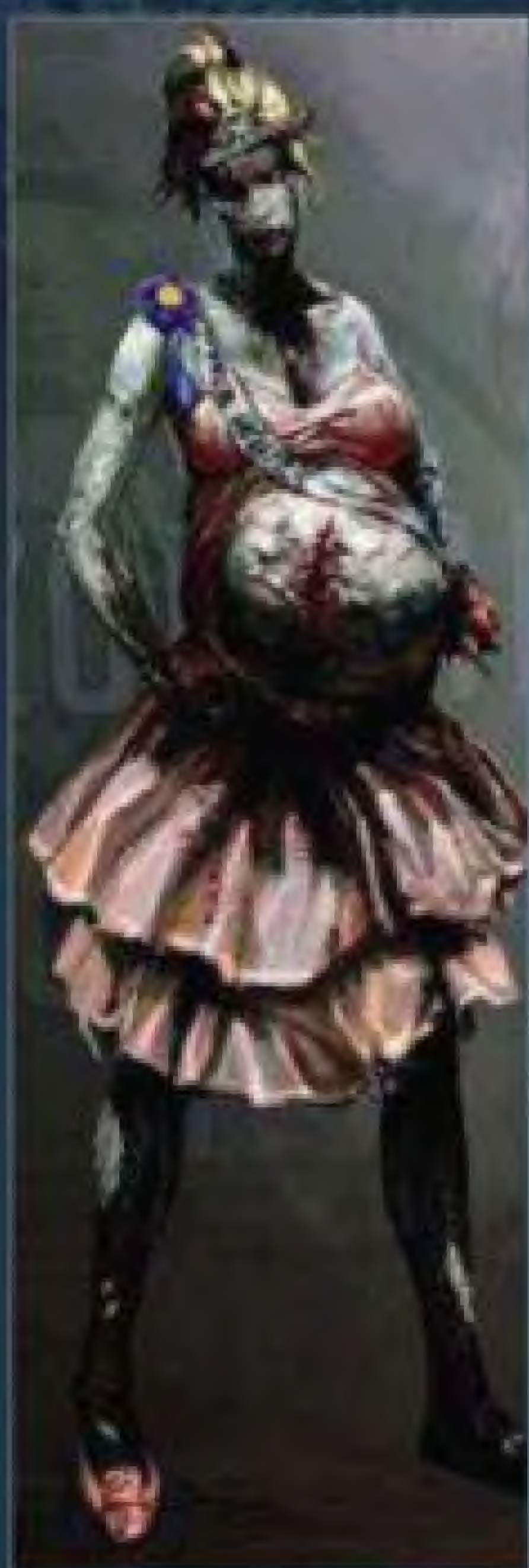
You'll have to be impervious to fear to fight zombies, and only the scariest games will steel you accordingly. The most frightening zombies to grace a videogame actually appeared in a family-friendly Nintendo title. *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time* was released in 1998 on the N64. It was a lovely, chirpy game, full of faeries and magic and horse riding – until you reached the Royal Tomb. You entered by playing a little ditty on your ocarina, which caused the sky to darken and unleash a torrent of rain. Running into the tomb, you met the ReDead. These dirty creatures looked like rocks – until they uncoiled into a standing position and started lumbering towards you. Not so bad, right? Then they screamed; a piercing, heart-stopping scream. By this point, you were sobbing, and probably a little soiled. The ReDead then leapt on your back and started munching away at your brain, which is usually the part where you passed out in fear.





P is for PETS

Yes, pets win prizes, but when they're zombie pets, the prize is your throat. And possibly your tender yet delicious nipples. Frank West fought killer zombie poodles in *Dead Rising: Chop Till You Drop*, but Raccoon City had the biggest menagerie of zombified creatures, ranging from simple dogs in the first game to zombie elephants and lions in *Resident Evil: Outbreak*. You don't need to be Dr Doolittle to know what's on the tip of their tongues – it's your eyeball.

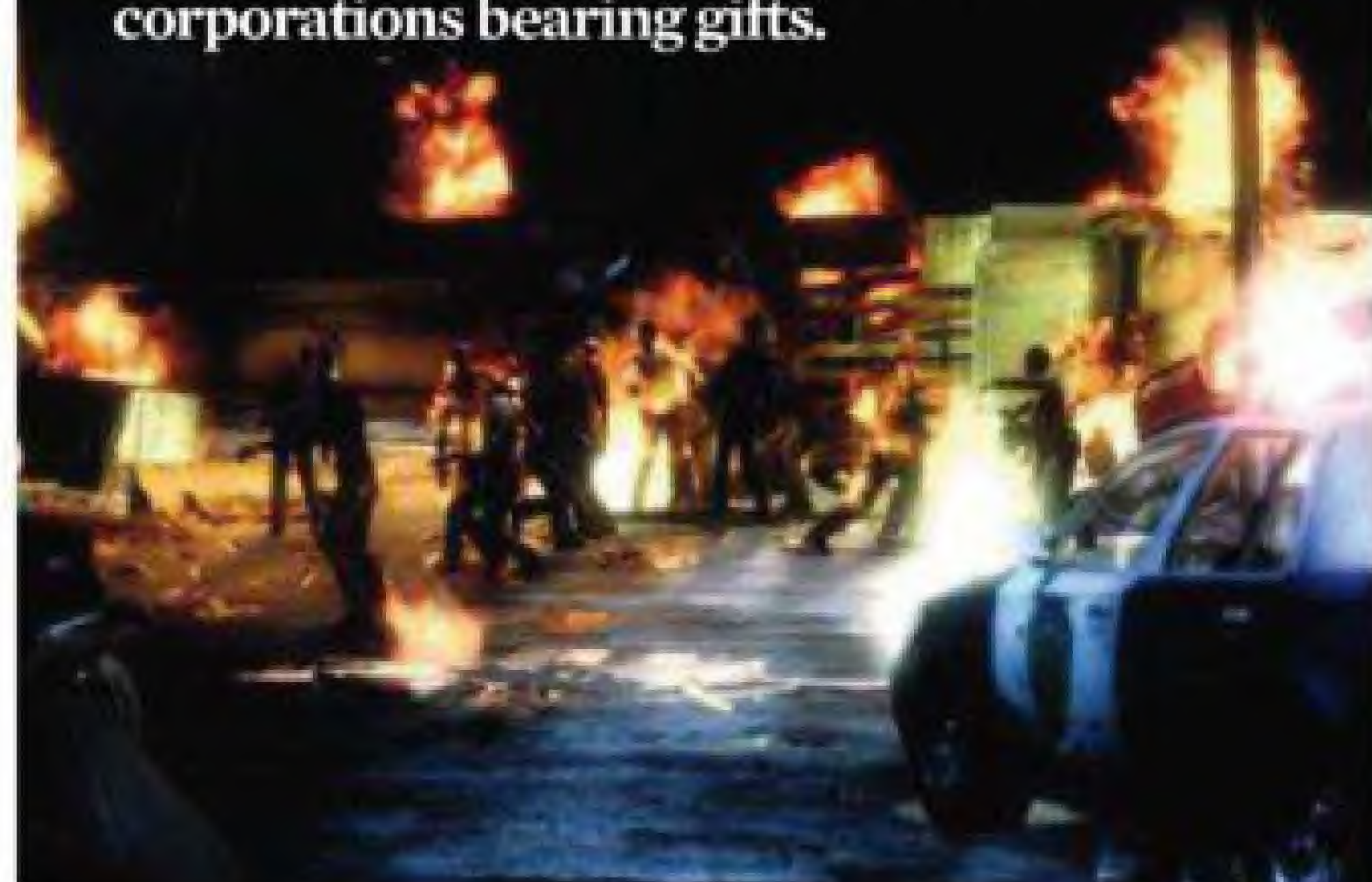


Q is for (BEAUTY) QUEENS

Oh sure, she may look enticing, with her pageant sash, her sparkly tiara and her pallid grey skin, but this zombie glamour girl from *Zombie Apocalypse* puts brains before beauty – unfortunately, they're your brains. Key lesson here: don't be swayed by a pretty face.

R is for RACCOON CITY

Raccoon City (population 100,000) was a small Midwestern city, heavily indebted to the not-at-all-evil Umbrella Corporation. Umbrella had injected jobs and money into the community. Unfortunately, they'd also injected the zombie-creating T-virus into the community, resulting in the horrific incidents featured in the *Resident Evil* series. Raccoon City was ultimately nuked flat by the US government in 1998, so the lesson here seems to be: stay away from built-up areas and pharmaceutical corporations bearing gifts.



S is for SAFEHOUSES

When you're killing meat-sacks, you need to have a base of operations. In the *Resident Evil* games, you always knew you were safe in any room with a typewriter. Both *Dead Rising* games featured a safe room that you had to escort panicked members of the public to. But it was the *Left 4 Dead* games that really made you yearn for their safety – you'd see them, glimmering in the distance, with nothing in-between but hordes of hunters, smokers and boomers. Make it to one and you'd be treated to some health kits, ammo, and plenty of hopelessly depressing graffiti. Make sure you know where *your* safehouses are.



T is for TOOLS OF THE TRADE

If games have taught us anything about the undead uprising, it's that guns will be largely useless. A shotgun blast can clear a wave or two, but as soon as the ammo runs out you're screwed. A machete, on (or hopefully in) the other hand, is the gift that keeps on killing. It's all about the mêlée combat with zombies, and over the years players have smashed in the faces of their re-animated loved ones with a variety of household objects. *Zombies Ate My Neighbors* featured a weed whacker, *Siren* saw pokers put to good use and *Left 4 Dead 2* added a *Shaun Of The Dead* homage with a cricket bat. The king of the suburban smackdown, though, is Frank West, who unleashes an entire mall's-worth of household objects (250 in total!) in the *Dead Rising* games. Only once you've experienced taking down zombies with frying pans, traffic cones and tennis balls will you truly be ready to fight.

U is for UNDERPANTS

You can't be afraid of a challenge when the time comes. Sir Arthur wasn't. First appearing in arcade classic *Ghosts And Goblins* in 1985, Arty was a brave knight who ploughed through the rotting ranks in a suit of silver armour – until he got hit, when his armour fell off and he was forced to continue the fight in nothing but his undercrackers. The game was notorious for being incredibly difficult – if you got to the end, it revealed that the final boss was a patsy, and you'd have to complete the entire game again on a harder difficulty to defeat the true boss. Some players are still in therapy today.





V is for VOODOO

Don't worry if you're a coward – Guybrush Threepwood was a lily-livered pirate wannabe, but he still managed to defeat the zombie pirate LeChuck with a voodoo doll made from bits of snot and crispy beard bits in *Monkey Island 2*. Pretty good, considering he fights like a cow.

W is for WAR

“Do not pray for easy lives, my friends. Pray to be... stronger men.” The inspiring words of President Kennedy there, shortly before he started popping caps into the domes of the undead. If you don't remember that particular piece of newsreel, then you probably haven't encountered “Five”, the *Call Of Duty: Black Ops* map that lets you play as Kennedy, Nixon, Castro or McNamara as you ward off a zombie uprising within the Pentagon. Let these words swirl in your mind as you plant an axe in undead Uncle Adrian's chest.



X is for XBOX MODIFICATIONS

If you're going to take your zombie killing seriously, nothing screams “pro” like a custom case for your Xbox. Pictured below, you can see a *Left 4 Dead*-inspired effort created for Arizona resident FatalJapan by his mate. FJ's pal has gone for the old “big bloody handprint on the side” look, presumably using lashings of his mum's red nail varnish in the process.



Y is for YAKUZA

Kazuma Kiryu is the sort of guy you don't want to mess with. A former Yakuza boss, he's the kind of character who'll happily hand you your own arse on a silver platter – although if you're also a Yakuza, there's a fair chance that he'll insist you both go up to a rooftop and rip your shirts off first. It's a Japanese thing. Kazuma unexpectedly fought zombies in the sixth *Yakuza* game, *Of The End*. But he did it with honour, good humour and fine whiskey – and so should you.

Z is for ZOMBIE ZOMBIE

Finally, we arrive at the origin of the videogame zombie outbreak, the rather odd *Zombie Zombie*. Designed by Sandy White on the ZX Spectrum as a sequel to the brilliant *Ant Attack*, *Zombie Zombie* plonked you in an isometric city armed with just a helicopter and a pair of bellows. The helicopter moved blocks around to create staircases, and then you baited the corpses into throwing themselves off the rooftops. As a tactic for fighting the mangy menace, we really don't recommend suggested suicide (“Would the drooling gentleman like to step off this building, perchance?”) but it's still probably better than leaping off yourself. The best thing about *Zombie Zombie*, though, was probably the fantastic message on the title screen: “Due to strong personal convictions, I wish to stress that this game in no way endorses a belief in the occult.”





EDISON
FEEL

JOHN RUSSO

George Romero doesn't deserve *all* the credit for creating the modern-day zombie, as **Ian Berriman** discovers

Ask any horror fan to name the godfather of the zombie genre and you'll get the same answer... Here's a clue – it begins with "George". However, there's someone else who was right there at the birth of the phenomenon, and he feels that he deserves some of the accolades too.

Back in the '60s, John Russo was a colleague of Romero's at Latent Image, a production company in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, that made commercials and industrial films, but many of whose employees harboured grander ambitions. When a group of them hit on the idea of making a horror film, it was Romero and Russo, acting in partnership, who came up with the script for *Night Of The Living Dead*.

"When the day's work was done, George and I would go to our editing rooms, where we each had typewriters, and we'd talk about ideas," Russo recalls. "I was working on a script where aliens come to Earth in search of human flesh, and he was working on some other stuff. The weekend before Christmas he came back and he had about 30 or 40 pages of the script. I'd said we ought to start in a cemetery, because cemeteries are scary. He basically had the girl being attacked and chased into the house and so on, and I said, 'I like this George, but who are these attackers? You never say.' And he said, 'I don't know.' I said, 'Well, it seems to me they could be be dead people,' and he said, 'Oh that's good!' 'But what are they after? You don't say that either. I mean, they attack, but they don't do anything.' He said, 'I don't know,' and I said, 'Well, why don't we use my flesh-eating idea?' So that's how they became flesh-eating ghouls.

"Then we had script meetings and beat some

ideas around with some of the other people, and I basically took the lead in that. Then I took all that material and George's script, which was in story form. I rewrote that, put it in screenplay form and wrote the second half of the story based mostly on my own ideas."

A novel approach

So does it frustrate Russo that his role in creating zombies as we now think of them is often overlooked in favour of Romero's?

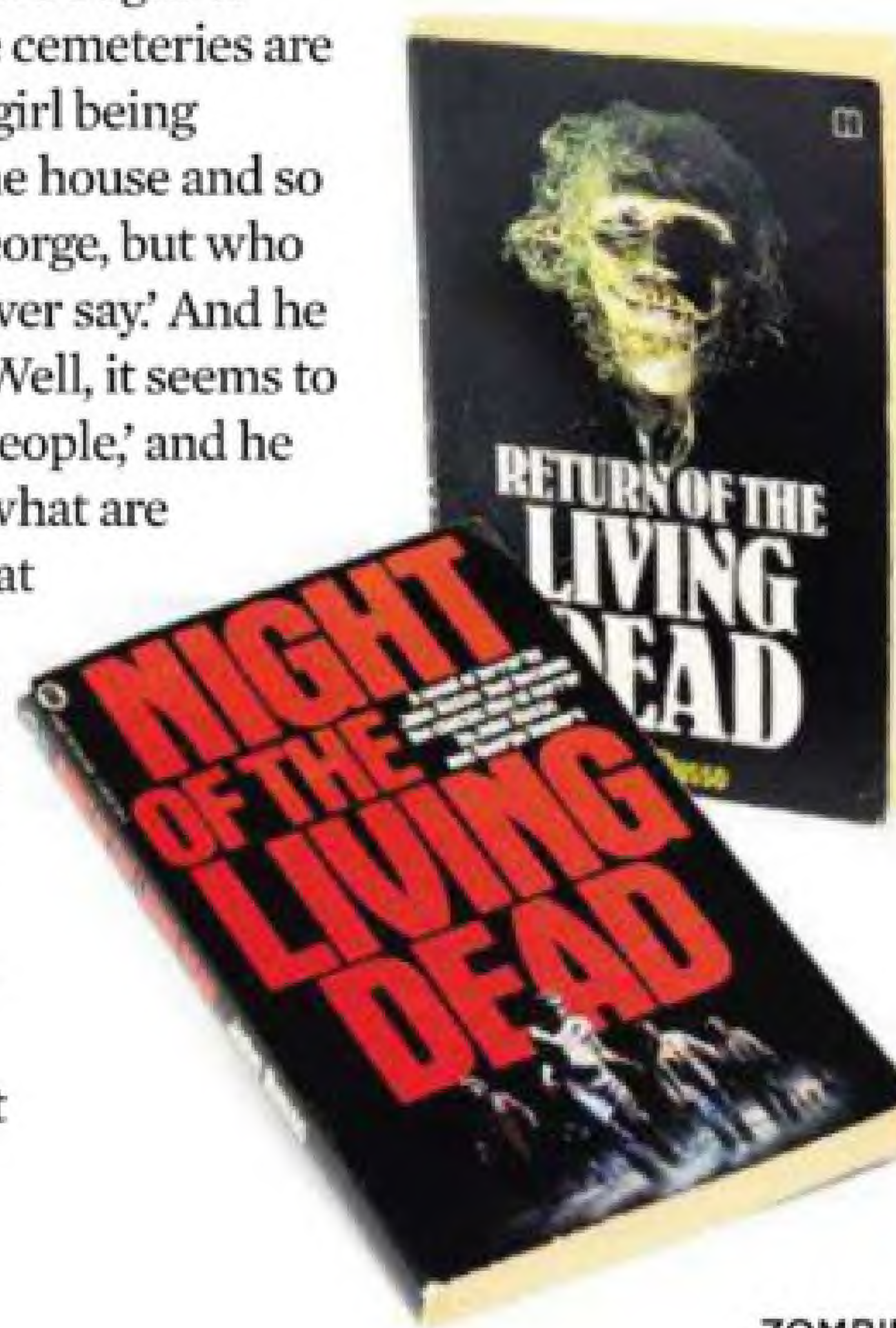
"I get a little miffed," he admits. "I don't begrudge George anything – he did a great job directing it, and without him we wouldn't have finished the movie. But if I wasn't there, that project would have died. George got tied up with some commercial clients, and I didn't want it to die, so I just took the ball and ran with it. Without me there wouldn't have been flesh-eating ghouls, which are now called zombies."

Russo also has a valid claim to be the father of zombie literature, since his novelisation of the film was first published back in 1973. It is, admittedly, a fairly bare-bones affair. "It's not as involved or thematic as my later books were. It had to be around 50,000 words and be very much like the movie," he explains. "That's just the way novelisations were done then."

It's still well worth reading for fans though, thanks to some interesting tweaks. For one thing, the hero of the piece, Ben, is *bitten* before he's shot dead, which takes some of the sting out of *Night's* famously bleak ending.

"Does the little girl bite him?" Russo asks, genuinely surprised. "I don't actually remember! Maybe I did it to come up with enough

»



NIGHT FALLS AGAIN

John Russo on remaking the 1968 classic

John Russo had more luck when it came to revisiting *Night Of The Living Dead* than he did with getting one of his sequel scripts into production. He acted as producer on the remake of the film, released in 1990 (see page 17).

"This is when remakes of classic horror films were just starting up," he explains. "For example, we'd just seen *The Thing*, *Invaders From Mars* and *The Blob*. So I called Russell Streiner and George Romero and said, 'Why don't we do a new version of *Night Of The Living Dead*?' Russell and George approved, so I called a few people and, based on the name value of the original film, we raised about \$5 million. George wrote a new script and he recommended Tom Savini to direct it. I co-produced with Russell, and George was an executive producer. I had a lot of fun making it and we tried our best to make a good movie."

The obvious question, of course, is why bother to remake a classic at all?

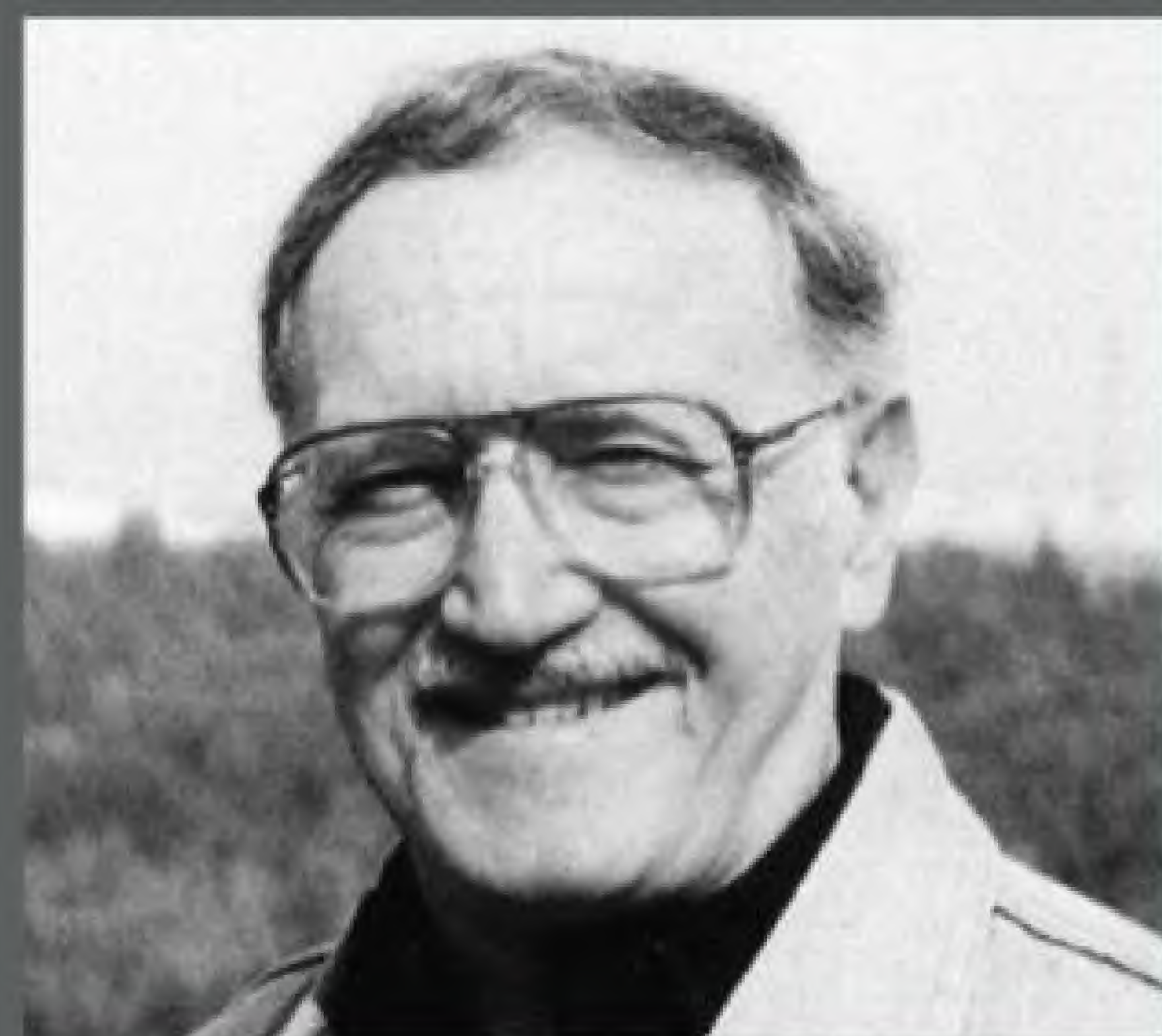
"It was the same reason that I did the 30th anniversary version of *Night Of The Living Dead*," Russo explains. "I have a responsibility to the shareholders of the original, who have been ripped off for years and years, to make them some money."

By all accounts (including that of Tom Savini – see page 74), it was an extremely troubled shoot.

"It was Tom's first time out as a feature film director," Russo explains, "and I think he made a few mistakes. We also got hit by a tornado, which kept us from shooting a lot of stuff. Every week we'd be on the phone with the investors trying to keep the money flowing in – that was a big battle. George was away most of the time; he was writing the script for *The Dark Half* at that time, and when he was on the set he was more of a director than a producer."

"I also remember there were times during the first cut where you couldn't tell where people were. We needed to fix all that. I remember saying, 'In *Friday The 13th*, one of the things that was really effective was that, between scenes, they used a full moon.' So we did that. It covered up some of the things that were out of synch. We also cut a lot of the film and did some more work on it, with George's approval. When it was all done and we had a screening, George came up to me and said, 'You were right – we made the right decisions in the end.'"

Calum Waddell



Kyra Schon's iconic little girl zombie from 1968's *Night Of The Living Dead*.

words, I don't know. I read a thing one time about a writer who's getting paid by the word and he can't decide if these two words need to be hyphenated or if they're two separate words, and he says, 'So I hyphenated them and lost 50 cents!'"

Not long after, Russo also authored an original zombie novel, a sequel to *Night Of The Living Dead* called *Return Of The Living Dead*. You might think you know the story, but you probably don't. Russo's book bears no relation to the 1985 movie (see page 96 for more on that), which was made under the same name after the rights to the property were sold on.

Set a decade after the original undead outbreak was brought under control, Russo's novel sees the zombies return. But the focus is more on those who take advantage of the resulting chaos, particularly a criminal gang as they take a family hostage then raid a nearby mansion. It's a grim tale. These sociopathic scumbags are breathtakingly casual about throwing people to the zombies. One sequence describes an attack by one of the undead in shockingly sexual terms, with a lustful zombie sinking its teeth into a girl's breasts, then "relishing the soft pulpiness of her thighs and groin". The book ends with the hero, a state trooper, shot dead, mistaken for a robber. One wonders whether Russo was trying to top the bleakness of the 1968 movie.

"Well, I wasn't thinking that way at all," he says. "The only thing I had in mind is that I didn't want it to be a carbon copy of the original. I wanted to go in some different direction. I said right away we had to get these people out of that farmhouse, because otherwise it's too much like the original."

Raiding ideas

One interesting story element in the *Return* novel is the existence of a religious cult. Whenever news comes of a death its members gather to drive a metal spike through the corpse's brain, just in case.

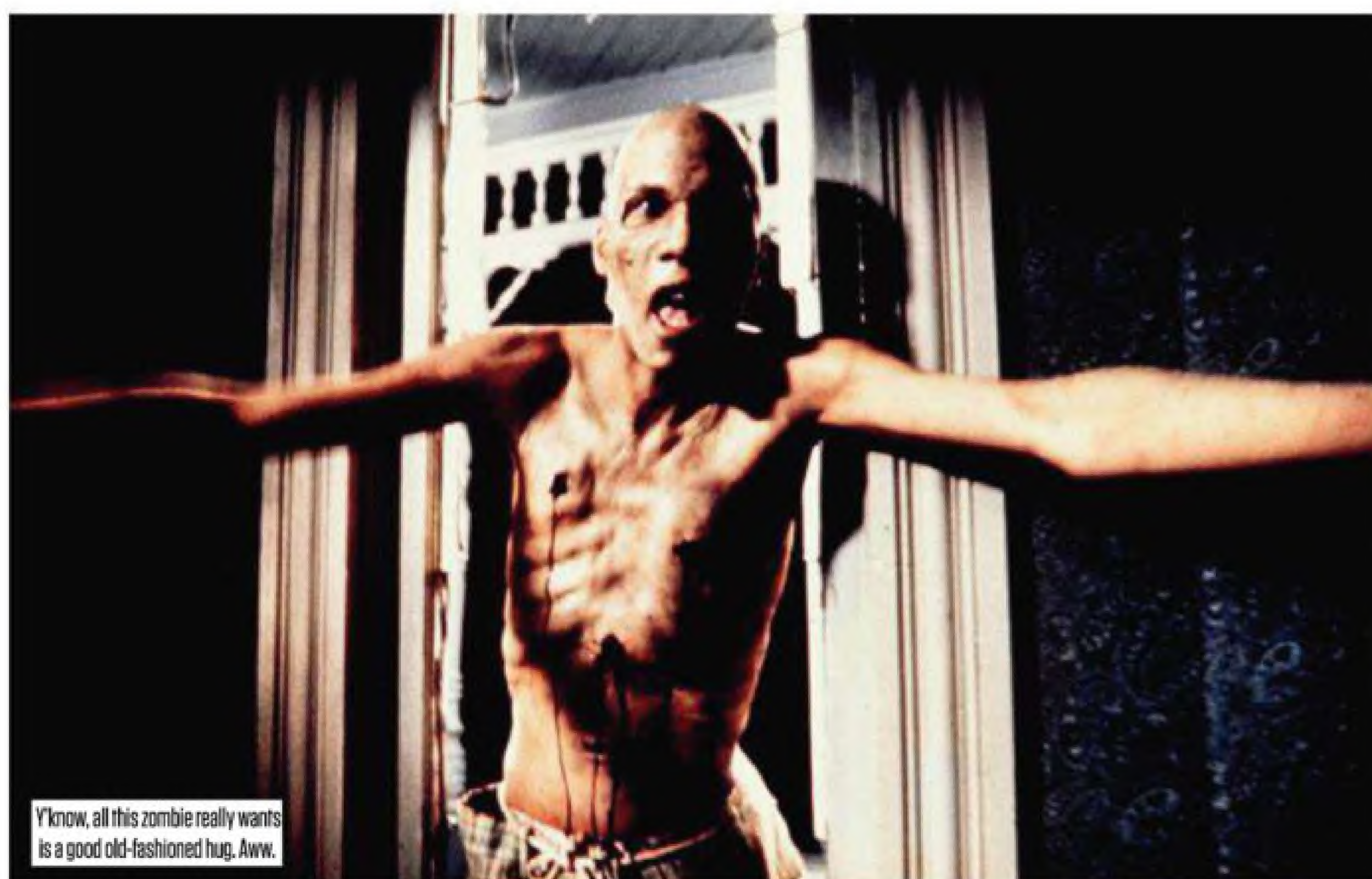
"That's a favourite theme of mine, dealing with religion," says Russo, who adds that he's more likely to be found reading *The God Delusion* than zombie novels. "If the dead did come back to life there would be religious cults springing up on the heels of that, and so I wanted to deal with that."

The story began life as a screenplay co-written by Russo and fellow *Night* alumni Russell Streiner and Rudy Ricci. When they had no success getting it made, Russo novelised the tale. Later, it was reworked again in another attempt to get a film off the ground. This later draft incorporated a raiding party, and Russo believes it must have influenced his old friend George.

"At one point, George and I read each other's scripts," Russo explains. "His *Dawn Of The Dead*



The 1990 remake of *Night* turns Barbara into a capable heroine.



Y'know, all this zombie really wants is a good old-fashioned hug. Aww.

script was originally a very claustrophobic thing. It dealt with a couple – I think the woman was pregnant or had a baby – and they were hiding in the crawl space of the mall, and that's all it was.

"They would go out and try to scavenge things, but it didn't have the SWAT team and all that stuff. I think that got into it after George read our script and saw a way to open up his! So the raiding party became a SWAT team, and this whole idea of people being able to gun down these zombies at will

"At one point, George and I read each other's scripts. His *Dawn Of The Dead* script was originally a very claustrophobic thing"

and being very cavalier about it got transmuted from our script into his."

The novel version of *Return Of The Living Dead* closes on a memorably chilling note, with the birth of a baby with "eyes lacking the sparkle of new life". Yes, Russo got there first on the zombie baby idea, decades ahead of the likes of Peter Jackson and Zack Snyder. If things had gone as planned, we'd have seen a film that ran with that idea. Instead, we ended up with 2001's universally derided *Children Of The Living Dead*, which Russo

(credited as executive producer) dismisses as "a piece of shit".


"I was dealing with Joe Wolf, who did *A Nightmare On Elm Street* and *Halloween II* and put the money up for those things," Russo explains. "By that time he wanted to do his daughter's script [for *Children Of The Living Dead*], which was horrible! I produced it, and I was stuck. In my script – which is what was supposed to get made – it starts out and there's already a zombie uprising and

people gunning them down, and they go into a hospital where it turns out three different women in that ward have been bitten. They give birth, and what's gonna happen to the kids? What are they going to be? So the government takes them and puts them up for adoption, but under strict conditions – they don't want to kill them, but observe them and see what happens.

"There are three girls, and when they reach puberty they develop porphyria, which is the real disease that gave rise to the vampire myth. Then

they become vampires, and anybody they take blood from becomes a zombie. So now you've got this town in Pleasantville, USA, with vampire children in charge of an army of ghouls. I have that script and it's nothing like what was made, so it still can be made."

As for the present? Russo is working to finance a film called *Escape Of The Living Dead*. He wrote the screenplay back in 2000, and it's been used as the basis for a five-part comic series (by Avatar Press in 2005). Ever the trooper, he remains optimistic that the project will go ahead.

"It's in the same vein as the original *Return*, but it's quite different," he says. "It has a combination of action and suspense and terror that the fans seem to love. We've been fighting to get the financing for five years now. I really want to make that movie, and it looks like we might be doing it now. It's always a battle. We've had people ready to put up the money and then they've had heart attacks and ended up in the hospital, things like that. It's just one thing after another, but you have to just keep at it in this business!" 

The Night Of The Living Dead novelisation and the original book of *Return Of The Living Dead* are now available in an omnibus edition called *Undead*, published by Titan Books. See www.titanbooks.com.

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HOW TO

SURVIVE A ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE

Dr Dale Seslick, the world's leading zombie apocalypse survival expert, imparts the essential knowledge that could just save your life in the event of an outbreak!

There's a problem with all this zombie survival malarkey. With so much information on the interweb, so many books on the subject, so many folks out there giving advice, how do you know who to believe? How do you know what info is correct? How do you know what's going to save you? Well, I think I can solve that problem right now. You need to listen to me.

Hi, I'm Dr Dale Seslick from the School Of Survival and I'm an expert in the field of zombie survivalism. My dedicated team of experts have spent the last four years touring the country with our live seminar, released a book on the subject, put together three self-help podcasts, and even taught the wise folk who had the good sense to

attend the *SFX Weekender 2*. Most importantly, I've spent the last four years researching techniques to help the human race thrive and survive when the dead revive.

Now, I'm proud to present research that we at the School Of Survival have come across since the publication of our book. It's all new and never been released before, so treat it with care and reverence. Just remember one important fact: as yet, there's never been an official, documented sighting of a zombie, which means that these survival techniques have yet to be tested on living dead subjects. That shouldn't put you off using them when the time comes, though. We can guarantee with certainty that 50% of them will definitely work – we're just not sure which 50%...

© ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAMES LAWRENCE

WEAPONS

Anything can be used as a weapon, from machetes to maracas, shotguns to Shoguns (both the vehicle and the Japanese warrior) and katanas to bananas (or bananas in pyjamas... even bananas in pyjamas with katanas). I would never presume to tell you what weapon you should use in a zombie apocalypse, as brain-smushing is all down to comfort, style and personal choice. Would you all start wearing your tracksuit bottoms tucked into your socks if I told you it would help you survive an apocalypse? No! Of course not! You wouldn't be seen dead looking like that. You must choose your weapons like you choose your clothes.

Members of the armed forces may feel most comfortable in camouflage gear with a rifle; chefs might be happier wielding a cleaver in their kitchen whites; Norse gods probably prefer a feathery helmet and a big hammer. You just need to make sure that the weight, style and handling of the weapon is right for you. Of course, there are limits to this whole personal choice thing: if your decision is to dress in a skin-tight purple velour tracksuit while defending yourself with a bendy straw then you probably deserve to be eaten. By a zombie. With its tracksuit bottoms tucked into its socks.



SAFE PLACES

The primary rule of survival in a zombie apocalypse is this: get high. Er, I'll rephrase that: get to an elevated location. Three other key words when preparing or choosing a safe house are fortification, fortification, fortification – Phil and Kirsty are just wrong (but I think we all already knew that, didn't we?).

A safe location is somewhere preferably elevated, properly fortified, in a non-urbanised area, that's decently stocked with supplies and has several escape routes. It should also definitely *not* be a hospital, right? Wrong! Despite popular theory, we have discovered that a hospital is the best place to be in an apocalypse above any other... specifically and exclusively if you are in a coma.

There have been at least three separate occasions in movies (or, as we prefer to call them, simulations) where coma patients have survived by being in a hospital, but there has never been one instance where a coma patient has survived in an elevated, fortified, well-stocked countryside safe house.¹ We recommend that should you be in a coma but not in a hospital, you immediately make your way to one, as this will increase your chances of surviving the outbreak by at least 67%. »

ALARMS

Don't want to waste a team member by having them on constant look-out duty? Afraid that using security alarms will alert the hordes with their jangling bells and sirens? Then look no further than the plug-in air freshener! If your safe house has retained electricity then these little gizmos are perfect as an advance warning system. Just plug them in by a door, turn them onto the motion detector setting and Bob's your uncle! Due to the overpowering stench of death and destruction that will pervade the land during an apocalypse, the delightful scent of wheatgrass and lavender that squirts forth and floats through the building when anything walks past it will immediately warn you that your walls have been breached – and leave you with a sense of calm and well-being that'll make the task of smushing the zombie a lot less stressful too.

SUPPLIES

Want to make your food supplies last longer? Then just start stockpiling food that nobody likes! If you're partial to a nice bar of Fruit & Nut then the temptation may prove so strong that you'll just eat the whole lot in a day. A survey by Oxfam stated that pasta was the world's favourite food so that's also a no-no, and don't even get me started on Pringles – with all that popping and the inability to enforce stopping, they'd be gone in a heartbeat. What you want is Marmite, sprouts, Spam or anchovies to ensure that your team isn't tempted to trough away the supplies, which means you'll survive for longer.

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YOUR TEAM

Who should you have on your team? No doubt you've already picked out your best pals to buddy along with you when it all kicks off, but according to the many simulations we've watched (not all of which are zombie-based: we also study other apocalyptic, survival and end-of-the-world scenarios), some folks have a better chance of survival than others. Here are your perfect choices.

94% survival rate: women who wear a uniform in their day job. This includes soldiers², warrant officers³, nurses⁴ and waitresses who work at Big Jeff's⁵. NB: the same does not apply to men who wear uniforms, who have an awful survival rate – unless they fit into category 3 or 4.

87% survival rate: boys between the ages of 0-16 (unless their father has a revolver and giant spider-things are involved).⁶ Unfortunately, girls in

the same age range have a much lower survival rate – maybe because they look freaky as hell as little-girl zombies in bloodied-up party frocks.⁷

81% survival rate: members of a minority. It's a common misconception that the black guy will die first. However, if they're gruff and mysterious they'll survive longer than if they're street savvy and wise-cracking (though the opposite will apply in the case of a genetically mutated intelligent shark apocalypse). Note: 95% of the simulations we watched to compile this information are American, so the term "minority" can also refer to Australians, Canadians, Brits or, more succinctly, anyone who isn't American. Note that this does not apply to Mexicans, who have a less than 3% survival rate.

95% survival rate: this applies for at least 50% of a couple in a romantic relationship

if there isn't a child involved, in which case the survival rate drops to only 5%. This applies to couples who are together when the apocalypse begins or couples who become involved during the apocalypse. The chance that one of the couple will die decreases if the couple are in two different places when the apocalypse begins and then have to seek each other out.

To some extent you can mix and match the categories to improve your group's chances of survival (for example, be in a relationship with a woman in uniform), but please don't take it to the extreme and compose your entire team of females from the age of 25-35 dressed as small girls in uniform from a minority group. You'll just feel like you're in a live-action anime film or end up getting put on some kind of register.


TRANSPORT

Using any mode of transport that requires fuel and mechanical inside-worky-bits is probably a bad idea, due to the maintenance required and the general shortage of petrol that will occur come the apocalypse. The next natural choice would be something along the lines of a bicycle, and we're not disagreeing that this isn't a viable idea (especially a penny farthing, which will give you a height advantage over the zombie hordes). The problem with a bike, though, is that you have to exert energy to power it, and you may very well need that energy to batter a zombie to re-death after you've dismounted. This leaves animals, and although we do recommend the giraffe (see *Dr Dale's Zombie Dictionary* for our full reasoning on this subject), they do require a certain amount of training to get them up to speed. So, we've come up with a brand new mode of transport for the apocalypse: legs.

Not yours, of course, as that takes us back to the issue of exerting too much personal energy. We're talking about getting someone else to carry you around. There will be those people who survive the apocalypse but who have no useful skills whatsoever. In this case they can become your own personal mode of transport and piggyback you around the land, ensuring that you travel in style and comfort and can save your precious energy for more important leader-type tasks. You could even provide them with two coconut halves to knock together as you go.



CONCLUSION

Unfortunately that's all we've got time for in today's lesson, but be aware that according to the Mayan calendar (as written by Simon Mayo), the apocalypse is coming in 2012, so it's imperative that you start planning now. You know what they say: "Fail to plan, then plan to fail" – although we've discovered that the best-case scenario when you fail to plan is to flail a pan, which should at least keep any attacking zombies busy until you come up with a better tactic (like giving it a sock with a wok... or you could even kill it with a skillet). Anyway, keep learning, keep alert and stay safe. 

You can learn more about Dr Dale's zombie survival techniques by buying the book *Dr Dale's Zombie Dictionary*, visiting <http://howtosurviveazombieapocalypse.co.uk> or following @htsaza on Twitter.

[1] *Resident Evil*, *The Walking Dead*, *28 Days Later* [2] *Day Of The Dead* [3] *Alien* [4] *Dawn Of The Dead* (the remake)
[5] *The Terminator* [6] *The Mist* [7] *Night Of The Living Dead*, *Dawn Of The Dead*, *The Walking Dead*, *Dead Rising* (the intro), *Island Of The Dead* (the trailer)





MAX BROOKS

Bestselling novel *World War Z* is being made into a blockbuster movie. **Joseph McCabe** talks to its author

Given the sheer number of zombie novels and stories that have come out in the last few years, it's difficult to believe that there was ever a time when even the word "zombie" would make book publishers sweat. But such was the case when Max Brooks first sold *World War Z*.

"*World War Z* wasn't the original title," says Brooks of his acclaimed 2006 novel, which tells the story of the decades-long war against the undead in the form an oral history compiled by a UN agent. "When I first wrote the manuscript it was called *Zombie War*. The people at Random House said to me, 'Look, we love the book. But you gotta change the title. You can't have the word 'zombie' in the title because it's going to turn a lot of people off.'"

"This is when zombies were unpopular," he sighs. "Nobody was into that sort of stuff. It was still very subculture. They were like, 'You say the word "zombie" and it's really going to shut out a lot of potential readers.' So we changed the title to *World War Z*."

These days, Brooks is amused by the irony of *World War Z*'s success, since it's opened the door for titles such as *Zombieland*.

"That's the great irony," laughs Brooks. "You can stick 'zombie' onto anything and it will sell. *Pride And Prejudice And Zombies* by Seth Grahame-Smith... He's an honest, straightforward dude. He'll tell you, 'Hey, there's only 15% of the book that's actually zombies. Most of it's Jane Austen.' But people went apeshit for that! Even Patton Oswalt stuck the name 'zombie' on his biography [*Zombie Spaceship Wasteland*]. My God, zombies are so popular now that everybody is trying to cash in. We see a complete 180 from when I wrote *World War Z*."

We ask Brooks what he thought about the similarities between his book *The Zombie Survival Guide* and *Zombieland*.

"The truth," he laughs, "is there's nothing better than to be ripped off, because the only way that being ripped off hurts you is when nobody knows you got there first. Then it can really hurt you, because nobody knows, but the thing is, when *Zombieland* came out, all the bloggers were saying, 'Oh my God. It's like the movie version of *The Zombie Survival Guide*.' And literally the day it came out, *The Zombie Survival Guide* went right back on the *New York Times* bestseller list. So I'm waiting for those dudes to make a sequel. Come on guys – get your asses in gear!"

Brooks confesses he's more than a little delighted by the mainstream acceptance. As he speaks with *SFX* on the phone from his home in New York City, he's getting ready to fly to Glasgow to watch director Marc Forster and producer/star Brad Pitt shoot the film adaptation of *World War Z*. And he says he's still fascinated with exploring the way a zombie-infested world would work.

"Zombies are a global threat," he says. They're a big, massive, multi-dimensional threat. It's not like you're trapped in the wilderness somewhere versus one werewolf. Zombies are big, and therefore I was surprised that every zombie story I'd ever read or seen was always small. I was always left with bigger questions. When I saw the original *Dawn Of The Dead*, the most interesting scenes for me were when they were watching society break down on television. I wanted those questions answered, and nobody was giving me that. So I literally just decided it was time to answer my own questions.

"I'm always thinking, 'Well, what is the government doing and what are other countries doing? And how would you fight an actual war? And how would you feed refugees and keep law and order? And what happens when trade breaks down – how would different cultures react and how would different social strata react?' I always get way too into stuff. Right now I've got an unwritten biography of an obscure character from [anime series] *Voltron*

in my head. So that shows just what kind of brain I have!"

Though he's used the genre to tackle high-minded issues, Brooks admits his interest in zombies originates from a far more basic impulse...

"I was about 13, and we had just got cable TV. My parents would go out to dinner once a week and I would go into their bedroom in order to try and watch Showtime or HBO for a shot of tits – because that's what you do when you're a 13-year-old boy. So I'm flipping the channels, and suddenly there's this movie with this half-naked woman. She's in some jungle, in some primal setting, with natives dancing around her. I'm like, 'Oh, thank you, God. Here we are...' Suddenly zombies come out of the night and start eating people. Then before you know it, I'm watching an Italian zombie movie, *Night Of The Zombies* [aka *Zombie Creeping Flesh*]. Essentially, the filmmakers mixed in genuine authentic documentary cannibal footage from New Guinea with zombies. So when they cut to a zombie eating flesh, somebody's really getting eaten. (Not actually true – Cannibalism Verification Ed)

"Zombies are the only monsters that go after the entire human race, the only thing that comes close to a plague or a natural disaster"



BRAD BLOOD

They're making *World War Z* into a movie!

You might think that because he's not involved with the production of the *World War Z* movie, Max Brooks would be feeling a little bit of apprehension these days. In that, you'd be mistaken. "The truth is, I would have no power anyway if I were involved," laughs Brooks. "So there's no point. My work is done. My part in this process is over. I've sort of switched mental gears. Now I'm a fan. Now I just want to see a good zombie movie."

Brooks says he's well aware of the challenges in adapting a book that is, as its subtitle states, an oral history.

"I'm cutting that team all the slack in the world, because I can't think of a harder book to translate into a movie than *World War Z*. A movie has to have a very specific format for people to watch it. My book doesn't necessarily lend itself to that. I said to them from the very beginning, 'Guys, for what it's worth, as much as I'd like you to stick close to the book, I'd rather you make the best zombie movie you can make. If that means departing from the book, you gotta do what you gotta do.' I haven't heard much about it – you've probably heard more than me – but I have heard they're hiring movie stars from the countries they're filming in, so it sort of gives it an international flair, which I think is great. I'm a huge fan of Marc Forster as well as [screenwriter] Matt Carnahan and Brad Pitt."

So I would be very surprised if this movie didn't have the same kind of depth and intelligence that the book had."



Brad Pitt filming *World War Z* recently, in Cornwall.

© WAYNE PERRY/REX FEATURES

If that's not something to get you lying on a therapist's couch, I don't know what is!"

Rather than seek a psychologist, Brooks channelled his fears into his writing, first with an Emmy Award-winning stint on *Saturday Night Live*, then as a horror storyteller. Fittingly, he says he was buoyed into adulthood by the movies of George Romero.

"Ironically it was Romero – I saw *Night Of The Living Dead* a couple of years later – who gave me hope. The Italian movie was all doom and gloom. But I saw *Night Of The Living Dead* and I was like, 'Oh my God. There's a way that you can fight them. There are ways to do it. Maybe these characters aren't doing it the right way, but at least there are right ways.'

"Then when I saw *Dawn Of The Dead* in graduate school I think I watched it every day for a year. I'm not kidding! I came home every day to my basement apartment in DC and just put on *Dawn Of The Dead*. That, I think, is probably the best zombie movie ever made, because it deals with social collapse. I think that's why Romero had the biggest impact on me – it wasn't the zombies, but the social commentary. Romero was using *Dawn Of The Dead* as a way to talk about what was going on in America, and specifically what was happening to his generation. The whole point of the shopping mall and people just throwing rational thought out the window for greed – that's what happened to Romero's generation. They all started off like *Easy Rider* and they all ended up like *Dawn Of The Dead*. A lot of zombie movies haven't followed that, so a lot of people that came after Romero focused mainly on heads being blown off. They left that social commentary in the dust."

"I think the only real substantial break with Romero," adds Brooks of his own zombies, featured not only in *World*



The sincerest form of flattery? Woody goes in to bat in *Zombieland*.



A zombie Cossack gets frozen stiff in *The Zombie Survival Guide: Recorded Attacks*.

War Z but in *The Zombie Survival Guide* and the graphic novel *The Zombie Survival Guide: Recorded Attacks*, "is that his zombies start off with memories. His zombies evolve. Even in *Night Of The Living Dead* they're afraid of fire. In my world, they're not.

"Romero's whole thing is about telling interesting stories. But for me it's the lack of humanity that makes them so scary. The idea that there's no rational thought, no distraction and no compromise. I think in some way that comes from being a Jew and thinking, 'Wow, there was a time when people were putting little babies in gas chambers and not even giving it a second thought.' The idea that the people who died in the Holocaust did nothing to deserve that. And that's the thing about zombies – they kill innocent people who have done nothing to deserve it.

"Zombies," he continues, "are the only monsters that go after the entire human race. They're the only thing that comes close to a plague or even a natural disaster. Those people who died in Katrina – that water, that storm, it had no emotions. And those people did nothing to deserve that. Every other monster obeys Rule Number One, and Rule Number One is 'Humans are the dominant species on the planet – so don't fuck with us.' Basically obeying that rule means that the only way for a monster to feed is to take us out one by one in dark little corners when the rest of us aren't looking, and therefore they can feed in obscurity. But zombies pay no attention to that – they go right for us. I think it's the difference between a predator and a virus. I guess it's like how a mountain lion can stalk us in the hills, but there are only so many joggers it can attack before we whale on it. Whereas Ebola really doesn't care!"



World War Z, *The Zombie Survival Guide* and *The Zombie Survival Guide: Recorded Attacks* are all available in paperback from Duckworth.

storenaps.com
www.sfx.co.uk

THE SFX ZOMBIE T-SHIRT

All the best-dressed
undead are stepping
out in one of these!

Do you like the “wartime propaganda” poster art on the free poster with this issue? We love it too! So much so, in fact, that we thought we ought to get our artist Matt Talbot’s design – visit <http://mattrobot.com> to see more of his work – immortalised (see what we did there?) on some high-quality short-sleeve black t-shirts. You can buy one for £15 by visiting www.sfxmerch.co.uk/merchandise/sfx. Just mind how you’re walking in it if your neighbours are a load of trigger-happy rednecks...

BUT IT NOW!
£15



The site is secured by Sage Pay and MasterCard SecureCode, so rest assured, your online purchase is safe (scammers are even less welcome than reanimated corpses around these parts). While you're there, why not pick up one of the *Dawn Of The Dead* or *The Walking Dead* t-shirts on sale too? Visit www.sfxmerch.co.uk/merchandise/zombies to view the full range of undead tees available – it's safer and more convenient than looting them after the zombie apocalypse arrives!



Artwork by William Stout.

TIME MACHINE

THE STORY BEHIND THE SF AND FANTASY OF YESTERYEAR

1985

THE RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD

It's the punky cult favourite that popularised fast-moving, brain-hungry zombies! **Joseph McCabe** looks back at the rock'n'roll classic with the movie's 1980s cast and crew

Dan O'Bannon was well-known to genre fans prior to crafting *The Return Of The Living Dead*, having already scripted *Alien*, *Dead & Buried* and *Dark Star*. But with his directorial debut, O'Bannon finally had the authority to give his id free rein, and so fused the humour, horror and pathos of his earlier work into a whole new kind of film genre: the zombie comedy.

Like most zombie films made in the last 40 years, *Return's* history begins with George Romero's *Night Of The Living Dead*. Filmmaker John Russo co-wrote Romero's seminal 1968 shocker and, after its release, retained the right to use the words "Living Dead" in a title. So while Romero crafted his own series of zombie films, Russo planned a sequel to *Night* with director Tobe Hooper, and invited O'Bannon to revise their script.

However, when Hooper quit the project to direct *Lifeforce* (yet another film that O'Bannon had scripted), O'Bannon was given the opportunity to direct his first movie. He took it, but insisted that he be allowed to rewrite the script entirely, severing all ties with Romero's universe, except to

reference it (with tongue planted firmly in cheek) as a work of fiction.

As the late director states in Christian Sellers and Gary Smart's book *The Complete History Of The Return Of The Living Dead*, "You've got to ask yourself – if you're gonna make a movie about corpses coming back, what is there left to do? What possible approach can you take that hasn't been done a million times with *Friday The 13th* and *Halloween*?

generation by such things as slapstick comedy and EC horror comics. It was an attitude shared by the crew O'Bannon recruited to work on his film, chief among them artist William Stout.

From barbarians to zombies

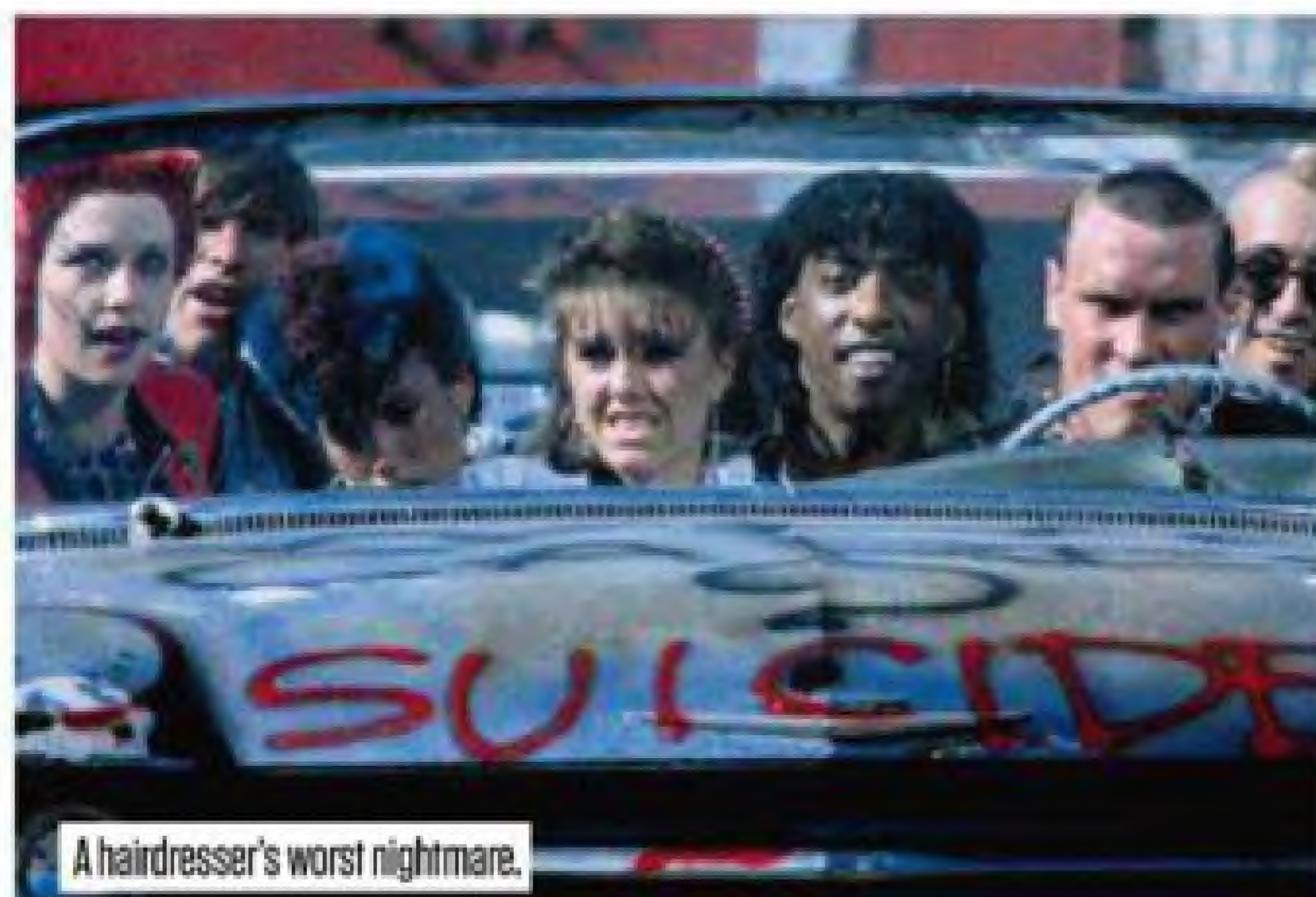
"My first real foray into filmmaking," says Stout, speaking with *SFX* from his home just outside Los Angeles, "was when I got hired to work on *Conan*

"I just love that scene where the half-corpse is tied down and they actually get to talk to it, and it starts to explain what it's like to be revived"

The first thing I thought was, well, doggone it, there hasn't been a rock'n'roll zombie movie."

The Return Of The Living Dead has plenty of rock'n'roll on its soundtrack, including influential punk bands like The Cramps and The Damned. But rock'n'roll is more than just a form of music – it's an attitude, one captured for O'Bannon's

The Barbarian with John Milius as the writer/director. My production designer was Ron Cobb, and that was what really punched me into the film biz. I met one of his closest friends, Dan O'Bannon, at one of Ron's parties. Dan and I really hit it off. We enjoyed a lot of the same artwork and stuff. What I didn't realise at the time was that Dan was »



A hairdresser's worst nightmare.



He'd regret mocking the mullet.



"Zombies. Punk zombies. Right..."



The classic Ziggy Stardust look.



The A-Team had let themselves go.



"You want Seymour Butts?"

considering me as production designer for *The Return Of The Living Dead*. I used to come to Ron's parties and bring a batch of whatever artwork I was working on at the time to get feedback from the people at the party, and I was working on my dinosaur book [*The Dinosaurs: A Fantastic New View of a Lost Era*]. Dan was very enthusiastic about those pictures. At one party, I brought a cover I had done for the *Alien Worlds* comic book. Little did I know that that was the thing that cemented Dan's wanting me to design the film. He wasn't sure whether or not I could handle the high-tech aspects of the design work on the film. When he saw the cover, he later told me, a light bulb went off in his head, and he said, 'Aha, Stout can do high-tech!'"

Design of the dead

When O'Bannon got all the funding for the film lined up, he gave producer Graham Henderson a shortlist of those who he wanted to production design the movie.

"I think his first choice was [renowned comic book artist] Bernie Wrightson, and I was his second choice," says Stout. "Graham did some quick homework and found out that I already had a sizeable film résumé. I'd worked on not only the *Conan* film, but *First Blood*, the second *Conan* film, and *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*. Because of my film experience, Graham didn't even consider Bernie. He told Dan that he'd called Bernie and Bernie had turned him down, which wasn't true. What he actually did, he just called me up first and we made a deal, and I became the production designer for the film."



Half-corpse, all ugly.

Stout shared O'Bannon's desire to break from Romero's *Dead* mythology.

"Dan and I both agreed that the last thing we wanted was to have our film look like a Romero film," Stout explains. "Both he and I, well... We just weren't impressed by Romero zombies. It's basically people with rings under their eyes. To me, that's pretty boring!"

"I enjoyed *Night Of The Living Dead* for what it was – an incredibly low-budget film shot on a shoestring, with a terrific story and a cultural impact. But that was not the kind of movie we wanted to make. So I drew from a number of

different sources. One was from the mummies of Guatemala, Mexico. I was interested in what *really* happens to corpses after they die, and there are all kinds of photos of those mummies that I could refer to. I was also inspired by Bernie Wrightson's corpses and also Jack Davis and Graham Ingels's work for the EC Comics horror line – *Tales From The Crypt*, *Vault Of Horror* and *Haunt Of Fear*.

So that's where I drew my inspiration from, because we wanted our zombies not to look like any other zombies that had ever been on film. In fact, just as there are principal actors in films, Dan had made a list of principal corpses for our film, corpses

The Tarman was inspired by a half-melted Curly Wurly. Possibly.



GONNA MAKE YOU A TARMAN

William Stout on designing a gooey and grotesque zombie

Perhaps *The Return Of The Living Dead*'s most iconic zombie is the Tarman, designed by William Stout. Stout tells *SFX* that creating the monster was an unusual challenge.

"Tarman was a really interesting problem in that it had to look like a skeleton that was covered in this sort of tarry goo that was dripping off. But it also had to be a guy in a suit. Well, as soon as you put a guy in a suit, the suit you put on the guy is going to bulk him up. He's not going to look skeletal.

"So I had to figure out a way to design the suit so that he'd look skinny and skeletal and drippy. I moved a lot of the bones of the suit to the surface to hide his body under bones. Then the best thing of all happened – Dan hired Allan Trautman to play the Tarman. I take credit for the design of the suit, so I'm going to take 50% of the credit for the success of Tarman. The other half goes to Allan, who has this phenomenal ability to move as though his bones aren't connected. He really brought that suit to life.

"That's why on every film I work on, if I design a creature that has a guy in a suit, I always insist that they never hire a stuntman to wear that suit, that they always hire an actor. Because it's the acting that will bring that suit to life."



that he wanted me to specifically design to have a unique look."

Two of the most unique zombies in *The Return Of The Living Dead* have become favourites among the film's many fans: the disintegrating zombie nicknamed "Tarman", which is accidentally released from decades of storage in a barrel, and a decayed female zombie consisting of just the torso of a rotted corpse. "I just love that scene where the half-corps is tied down and they actually get to talk to it," laughs Stout, "and it starts to explain what it's like to be revived and how painful it is. The reveal of Tarman is pretty dramatic and effective too.

"I'd forgotten about that scene and I showed it to my family, and my son, who was probably about four or five years old at the time, just shot straight up into the air! That's a pretty powerful shot, the first time you see the Tarman. And I just love the casting. The cast is fantastic, just a great ensemble of actors."

Chief among the players in that cast is the film's leading lady, 19-year-old Beverly Randolph,

who plays the sweet, naïve Tina, girlfriend of Billy, the rookie medical supply warehouse worker who accidentally opens a canister of Trioxin gas, unleashing a horde of zombies onto a helpless Kentucky town.

Living characters

Chatting with *SFX* more than 25 years later, Randolph explains that O'Bannon gave his actors the time they needed to develop their characters.

"We had two weeks before rehearsal, which was very rare," says Randolph. "We all sat around – it was almost like therapy – and we talked about our characters and their background. I think Danny asked, 'Well, who do you think you are? Where does Tina come from?' I guess my full name in this script was Tina Spinelli and she was an Italian girl. They kept trying to dye my hair black – the blacker the better. They wanted black-blue, but of course my hair is naturally blonde, so it didn't take very well. I felt she was this girl who was totally in love with the

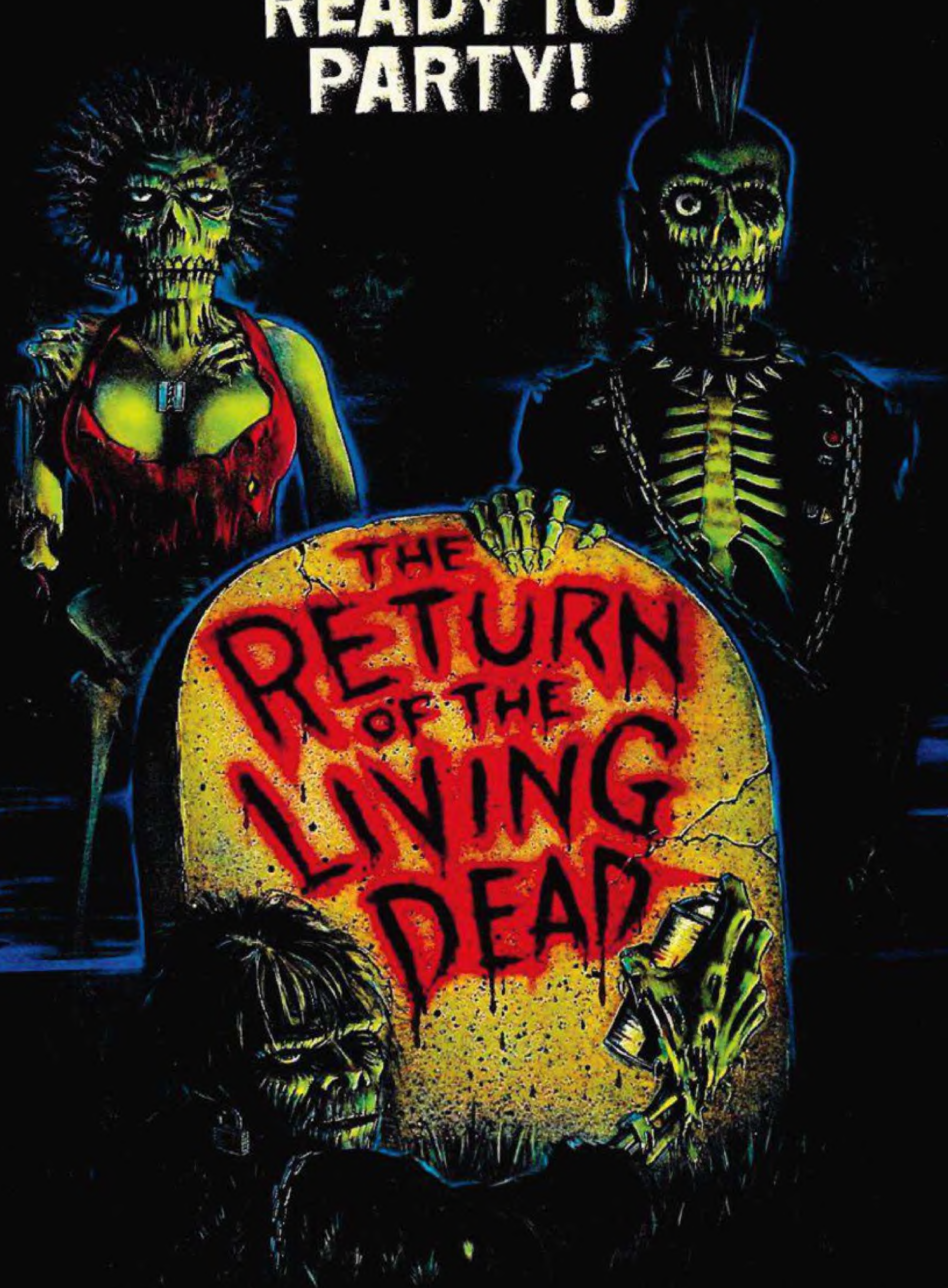
bad boy. She probably was a good Catholic Italian girl, trying her best to fit in with his friends. She was probably a very preppy girl at school."

The actors had input into their costumes, too. One of Tina's new friends is punk Scuz, played by actor Brian Peck, distinguished in the film by his classic '80s mohawk.

"I was very fortunate to get to really put his whole look together myself," Peck tells *SFX*. "In the script, all it really says is 'Scuz sports a green mohawk.' I was the one who pitched to Dan the buttoned trenchcoat look, which was more of a British punk thing at the time. Dan said, 'I love that idea. Why don't you put something together if you want?' I said, 'I would love to do that.'

"I actually went out to a thrift store and bought that trenchcoat myself. Then a friend of mine, an actress who was more punky than I was, had a lot of band buttons. So I put all that together. Once I did that, the costume designer and the wardrobe people really latched onto it and they

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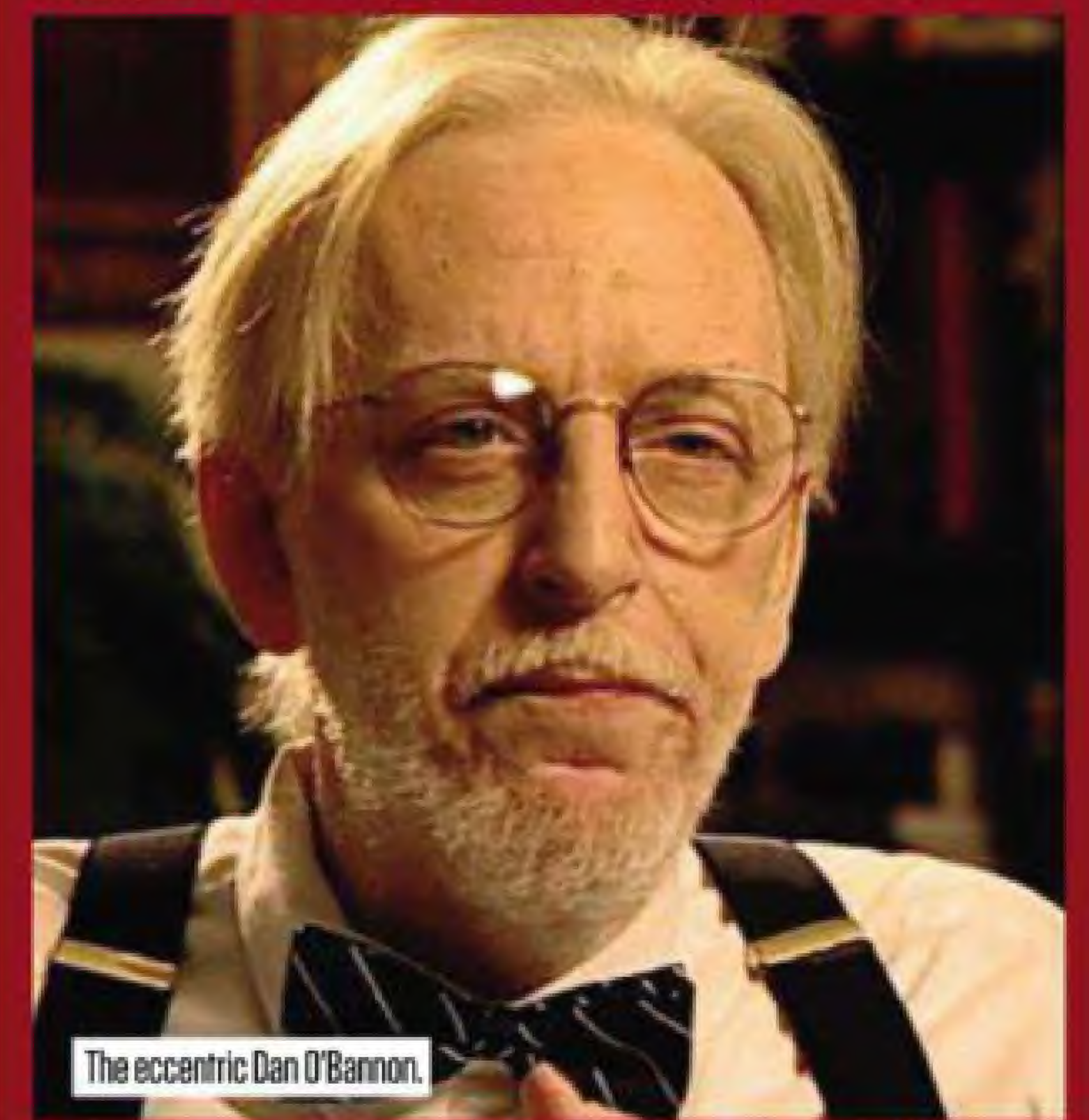
Remembering Dan O'Bannon

According to those who worked with him, the man who directed *The Return Of The Living Dead* was one of the more, ahem, unusual personalities in genre film history...

"Dan was one of the most brilliant screenwriters who ever lived," says William Stout. "He was able to write in such a way that it really tapped right into your spine as to just what scared you. He could do it in a way that was highly entertaining and often very funny."

"I think a lot of that came from Dan himself and his own paranoid in life. He's the most paranoid person I've ever met in my life. When I was working on the film, often Dan and I would drive together to the set. We'd have these long conversations. Dan had just purchased a house, so he told me he researched architecture in houses really thoroughly and found out that there was only one suitable type of house to purchase. I asked him what that was, and he said, 'Spanish adobe.' He said, 'It's just got one flaw. The walls are not machine-gun proofed.' So when Dan bought his Spanish adobe in Santa Monica, he had the walls taken out and he had steel plates put inside the walls, and then the walls put back into place so that his walls were machine-gun proofed!"

"The perfect word to describe Dan is eccentric," adds Beverly Randolph. "A cigar in one hand and a sandwich in the other at all times!"

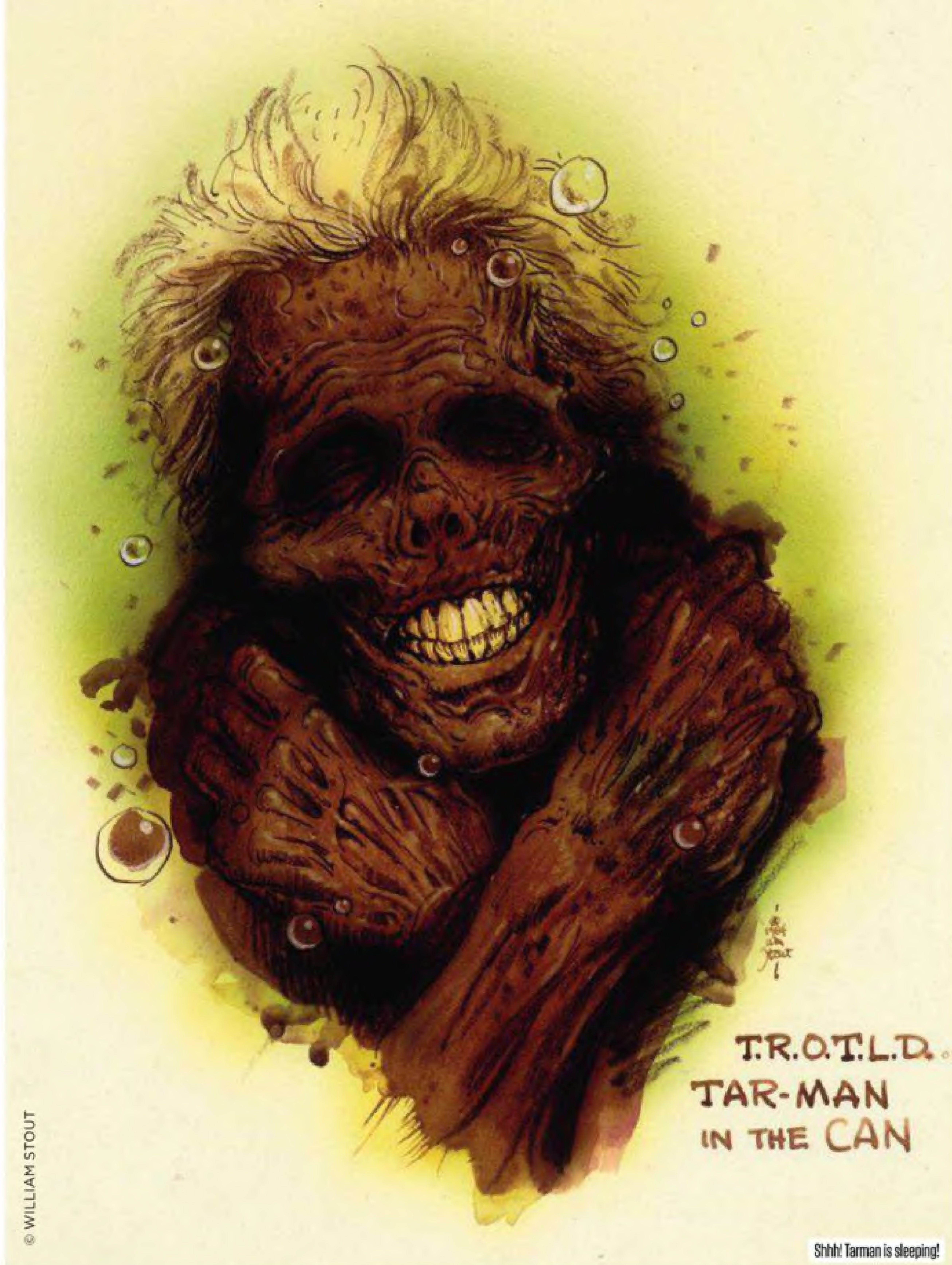


The eccentric Dan O'Bannon.

it came out, people were expecting another zombie movie, à la George Romero. What they got was so different and such a twist on it – that that's what made it last."

"It was great," says Randolph about making the film, "because we were all young and it was all new, and we had the two weeks to bond and just hang out together prior to filming. We keep in touch, we're close and we look out for each other. It's a lot of fun to have people that you've worked with that long ago still maintain a kindness and a fondness for each other."

"I've done close to 45 films now," says Stout, "and this is the only film on which I've ever stayed really tight and really close with the cast. Part of that, I think, is that Dan gave us a great gift, which was the two weeks of rehearsal prior to shooting. It affected the performances in the film. Because by the time we got to filming they had become friends, so it made the friendship they were portraying on film seem real, because it was."



"The horror is played very straight, and that makes what's funny in the film even funnier because it's sort of nervous laughter"

supplied the undershirt, then they gave me all sorts of great earrings and a nose ring. Then they bleached out my hair so that they could dye it green. But I took one look at it bleached and really liked the way it looked. I thought making it green was one step too far, and to my mind a little clichéd. Dan didn't really agree with me, but he didn't put his foot down. He just said, 'If that's how you want to look and that's how you feel, then fine. I really want you to be happy being who you are.'

"But I did *not* look like that in real life," laughs Peck. "This was the summer of 1984. I was a theatre major at USC, and I wore Ralph Lauren polo shirts and had a nice brown head of hair. I looked nothing like Scuz. I always take it as a huge compliment when, at a lot of these conventions we've gone to, people ask me if I was really a punk."

Peck explains how he also contributed behind the scenes on the film. "I ended up helping puppeteer the half-corps zombie, and I also helped puppeteer the split dog," he says. "Tony Gardner was the make-up effects guy who created the half-corps and created the split dog, and he ended up working on the film through his friendship with me. So when it came time to him needing some additional hands to help puppeteer these things, he just naturally asked me to do it. I ended up operating the mouth on the half-corps. They gave

me that assignment because whoever operated the mouth had to do the dialogue of the half-corps on set with Don Calfa, with Don sitting there questioning the half-corps."

"In post-production, an actress by the name of Cherry Davis ended up doing the voice of the half-corps, but the couple of other guys who were puppeteers were intimidated by the idea of having to do dialogue with Don, and I was happy to do it. With the split dog, I had this squeeze bulb on a tube and I was in charge of making it pant!"

The original zom-com

The efforts of the cast and crew paid off. *The Return Of The Living Dead* was a hit with critics and a moderate box-office success, spawning four sequels. Today, it can be viewed as the original zom-com, the film that made the likes of *Shaun Of The Dead* and *Zombieland* possible.

"I think one of the keys to its popularity," says Stout, "is that it's sort of like *Abbot And Costello Meet Frankenstein* in that it's funny, but it's not played for laughs. The horror is played very straight, and that makes what's funny in the film even funnier because it's sort of a nervous laughter."

"What make it unique," says Peck, "are the comedy elements, the great punk score, those great punk bands. The movie's unusual. At the time when



MIRA GRANT

The author of the award-winning Newsflesh series talks to Ian Berriman about epidemiology and the undead

There are three important things you need to know about Mira Grant straight away. Firstly, she recently won the John W Campbell Award for Best New Writer (and earned a Hugo nod) for *Feed*. The first book in her Newsflesh series, it's a political thriller set in the USA in 2039, 25 years after a sort-of-zombie apocalypse. It focuses on brother-and-sister bloggers Georgia and Shaun Mason (since "The Rising", blogs have largely supplanted the mainstream media as a trusted source of information) as they follow a Republican senator's campaign for the Presidency. Secondly, Mira doesn't actually exist, which makes her a rather tricky interviewee. Fortunately, her representative on Earth, Seanan McGuire (for whom "Mira Grant" is a *nom de plume*) is available to speak on her behalf. Thirdly: should you bump into McGuire at a party, the chances of a conversation about Ebola ensuing are unusually high...

"I'm a hobby epidemiologist," McGuire explains, "which means I study plagues and pandemics for fun! It means I'm one of the few people most folks ever encounter that can have passionate arguments about the origin of the Black Death in Europe."

Now hold on a minute! Much as we're keen to get onto talking about zombies, we're pretty sure they nailed down the cause of that quite a while back... "Well, there is some controversy about that!" says McGuire. "The dominant school of thought says that it was the Bubonic Plague, but there's a school of thought that says that the epidemiological evidence we've been able to dig out of church records indicates that it can't possibly have been the Bubonic Plague, because it doesn't fit the symptoms or progressive speed. I subscribe to the 'It was actually a haemorrhagic fever' theory. You can get into really passionate arguments about a disease that went away several hundred years ago!"

It's a passion that could have sent the author down a very different – and more dangerous – career path. "I wanted to join the Epidemic Investigative Service, a branch of the CDC [Center for Disease Control] that go around the world and study ongoing outbreaks," McGuire confesses. "It's a fascinating group of incredibly crazy people who will cheerfully go trotting out into the jungles where we think Ebola can be found and poke everything there, to see if they can be the ones to find Ebola!"

Naturally, McGuire's fascination with all things viral informed the nature of her zombies – or, to use the full terminology, "post-Kellis-Amberlee amplification manifestation syndrome humans". Her sort-of-zombies aren't actually *dead*, y'see. In the Newsflesh series, everyone carries a dormant form of Kellis-Amberlee, a hybrid of two man-made viruses built to cure cancer and the common cold. Only when it goes "live" do people turn into bloodthirsty killers.

"I wanted something that was recognisable as a zombie – I wasn't going to have to explain what a zombie was to all of my readers – but that was feasible as something you'd get from a viral infection," McGuire says. "You can't have dead people stomping about from a simple viral infection. Nor can you have magical, *Resident Evil* 'My tongue is suddenly 80-feet long, I can wrap it around your neck' zombies – it's just not going to work, awesome

as that would be! And I didn't want the zombies to move too fast cos that would lead eventually to them shattering all their tendons, and then they'd be very ineffective. Since my zombies are still alive, they would heal from a lot of injuries eventually. But if they injured themselves enough the other zombies would just eat them!"

It's absolutely vital for McGuire that her zombies have a plausible basis in real science, and it also really bugs her when movies

put nonsense into the mouths of scientists.

"I loved *28 Days Later*," she says, "but I didn't care as much for *28 Weeks Later* because their virology was bad. It's an interesting side effect of being me that if you don't bring in any virology at all and just say, 'The zombies are walking for undisclosed reasons' I'm happy as a clam, but the moment you say, 'We have zombies because of measles!' I'm like, 'Really? No!' And you've lost me. I'll spend the rest of the movie complaining at the screen about how stupid you are – which doesn't make for a good movie viewing experience for those around me!"

This belief in realism also extends to the rest of her world, which is impressively thought through in every minute detail. Kellis-Amberlee affects everything, from security (blood test units are standard at all entrances) to showers (which spray you with sterilising bleach) and farming (animals of a certain mass can also "amplify", which rather rules out cattle farming). So did she sketch out a complete series bible, or work out the details as she went along?

"I didn't want the zombies to move too fast cos that would lead to them shattering all their tendons and then they'd be very ineffective"



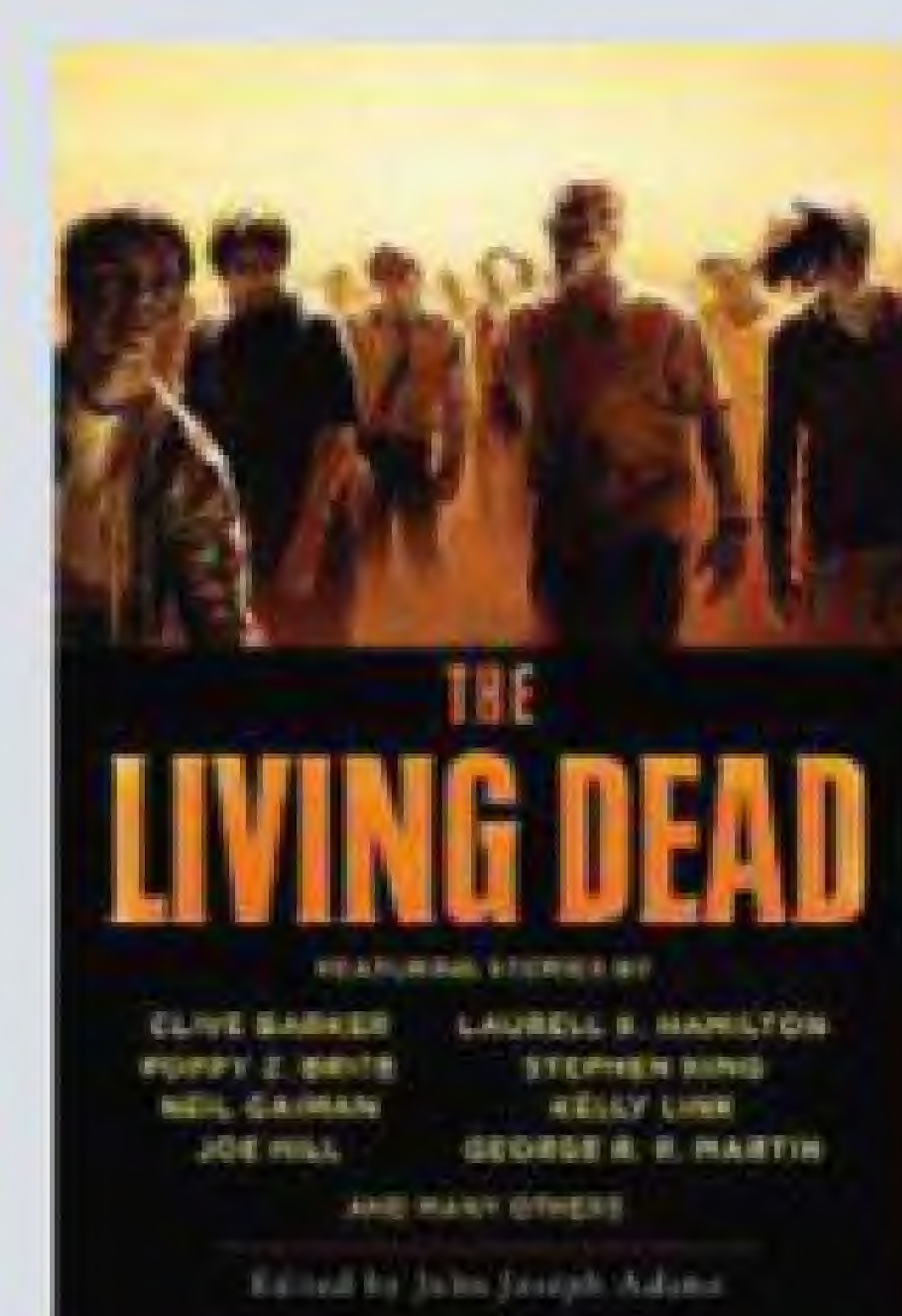
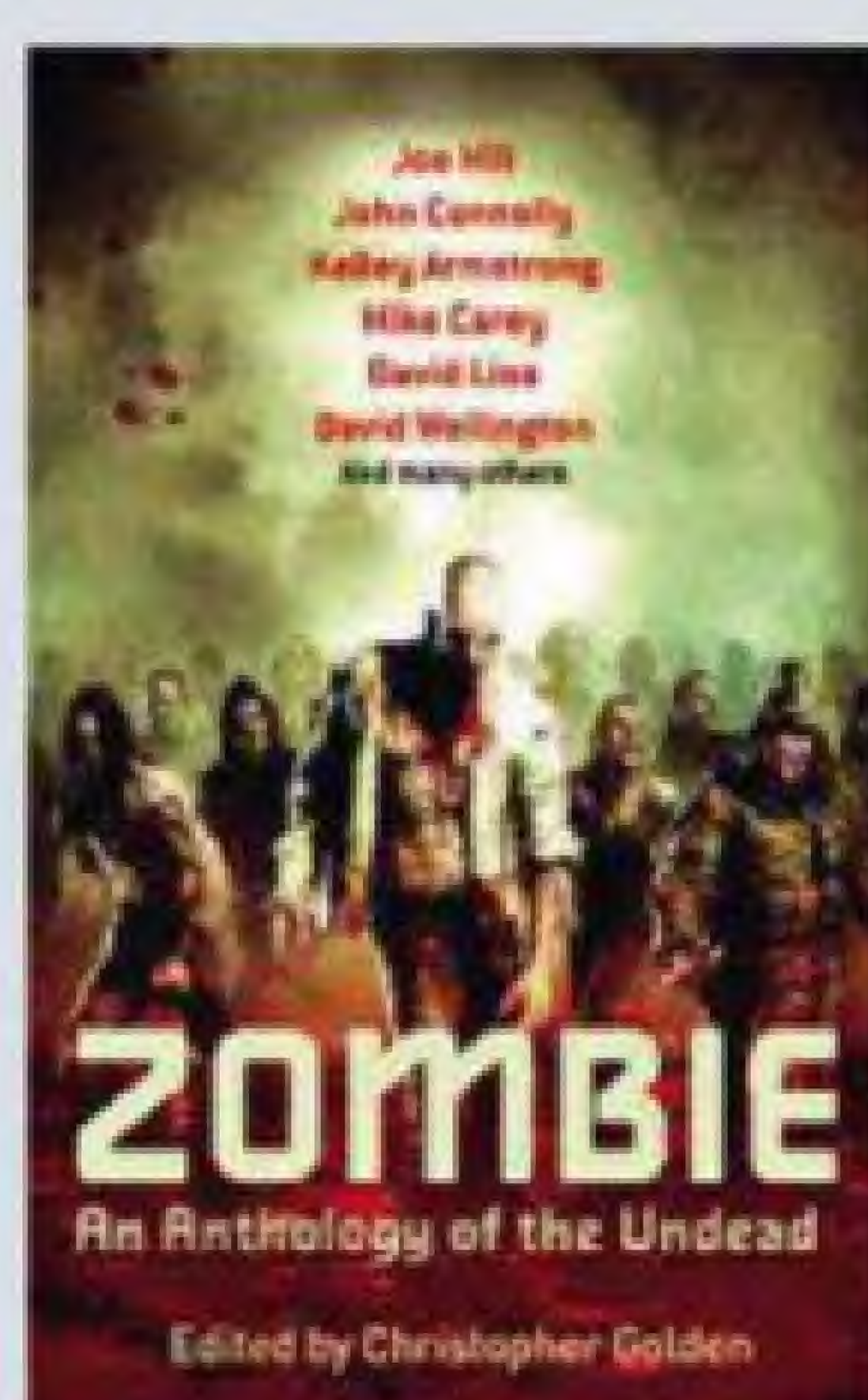


READ THIS

Seanan McGuire's favourite zombie books

You might think she'd avoid reading other work in the same field, to avoid being influenced, but Seanan McGuire is an avid consumer of zombie fiction. "I read a lot of the genre," she says. "I've been loving a lot of the short fiction that's been coming out of the zombie world. There's *The Living Dead* and *The Living Dead 2* from Night Shade Books; some of those stories are actively chilling. And in *The New Dead* [published here as *Zombie: An Anthology Of The Undead*] there's a story by Joe Hill that uses Twitter as the storytelling medium. I looked at that and thought, 'This is a cheap gimmick. This isn't going to be any good at all!' but it was the only story in that book that kept me up at night; it was so upsetting!

"Novel-wise, there's a small press called Permuted Press that specialises in zombie fiction. A man named Peter Clines printed a book through them that I'm thankful I decided to pick up for a laugh, because it looked like it was going to be phenomenally dumb. It's called *Ex Heroes* and it's brilliant – one of the best zombie books I've read in the last five years. It's set in a superhero world; then a zombie apocalypse happens, and it's the superheroes trying to protect the last survivors of humanity in the wake of that. A lot of the superheroes are not invulnerable, so you've got some zombies with superpowers. Marvel did a thing a couple of years back called *Marvel Zombies*, where all their superheroes became zombies, and I thought they didn't play that through all the way; they got distracted, wanting to have fun more than wanting to tell the story accurately. Peter Clines didn't do that; he said, 'What would happen? Okay, that's what's going to happen.' I like it when someone follows the rules of their universe, even to the point of damaging things they didn't want to damage!"



"A bit of both", McGuire says. "I sat down and blocked out the big things that I'd need to know straight away. What is Homeland Security like? What is animal ownership be like? What cities did we lose completely, and which did we manage to get back? Then other bits came along as it went. For example, Indian food is much more popular in the United States after *The Rising* than it is now because it doesn't depend as much on beef as a lot of cuisines that are popular here currently."

McGuire also does her research, drawing on the knowledge of experts in numerous fields.

"I have a lot of people that I can talk to at the CDC and various other health organisations," she explains. "One of the best things about being a virus geek is that it's odd enough that people just sorta *get on with you* out of the principle that there are simply not enough! But I've consulted in all sorts of areas. I've got geographical reference experts, and I've got a couple of gun experts who'll go through each book before it goes to print and say, 'You can't do this, and here's why.'"

As to why exactly zombies have become so popular of late, McGuire has a convincingly lucid theory, which combines a variety of cultural fears.

"If you look at previous cycles of the rise of zombie movies or bodysnatcher movies – anything that can make your friends your enemies very quickly – it always comes when we as a populace are afraid of something that's not easily identified, and right now we're afraid of everything!"

"In the States, people are afraid of terrorists, and they're also afraid of the government's response to the terrorists. Also, you have all these new diseases coming out of nowhere, and it's been so long since we've had a proper pandemic that people are going on dramatisations or what their great-grandparents said the last one was like. It's a completely new enemy for the first time

in a very long time. And there's a fear of loss of identity. People are working longer hours just to stay where they are, and you get worn down, so there's a certain quantity of the zombie being everyone's fear of where they'll be in another three or four years."

So where will Seanan McGuire be in three or four years? One thing's certain: she'll have another *Newsflesh* novel on her CV.

"I'm just finishing off the third book now, so it's coming to a close. I have to tie off so many things – I want it to be a solid landing, y'know? I'm not destroying the world or anything, but it's definitely the point at which this series is finished because, quite frankly, at this point the *Masons* are not going to speak to me any more! I try not to betray the characters I've built. Sometimes, unfortunately, that means a book series has to end."

Blackout will bring the trilogy to a close with its publication in June next year, but rest assured, McGuire will be continuing to write in this field.

"I would like to do more work as Mira Grant which is going to be similarly dark and bleak, but I don't know that I'll be doing zombies right away," she reveals. "I want to do an *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers*-type thing with parasitology. But there is another book I'm planning in the *Newsflesh* world, called *Rewind*. It'll be set in the same timeframe as *Feed*, but follow on the other side of the American political equation. *Feed* focuses entirely on the Republican campaign, and *Rewind* is going to focus on the Democratic campaign in that same time period. It's kind of inevitable that I will write more books about zombies though, because I'm a zombie nut!"



Feed and *Deadline* are available in paperback now, from Orbit. You can read more about the *Newsflesh* series at <http://miragrants.com>, and follow the author on Twitter – you'll find her lurking at @seananmcguire.



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Greg Nicotero

Effects genius Greg Nicotero has worked on everything from Romero's classics to the televisual flesh-tearing of *The Walking Dead*. Words: Calum Waddell

Greg Nicotero is a name that avid horror fans will be familiar with, as it belongs to the special effects artist behind some of the screen's most memorable zombies. He's done them all, from the flesh-munchers of George Romero's own *Land Of The Dead* and *Survival Of The Dead* to those seen in the mega-budgeted pot-boiler *Planet Terror*.

Beginning his career as Tom Savini's assistant on 1985's plasma-packed *Day Of The Dead*, Nicotero went on to form KNB EFX – currently the top studio in Hollywood when it comes to practical screen magic. With A-list credits that include the *Kill Bill* series, the *Narnia* franchise and *Drag Me To Hell*, Nicotero and KNB are no slouches. Most recently, the make-up wizard has had a chance to return to what he knows best: overseeing the entrails-eating excess of TV's *The Walking Dead*.

"You know, I wouldn't be here, working on *The Walking Dead* – and I certainly wouldn't have achieved what I have achieved – were it not for George Romero," begins Nicotero. "I was going to become a doctor before I went into special effects, and *Day Of The Dead* was my first big break. So

zombies mean a lot to me! Having now worked with Romero, Savini, Robert Rodriguez and also Joe Dante – we designed the zombies for his *Masters Of Horror* episode, "Homecoming" – I would say that I've been through a 24-year zombie film school. It was great to bring that experience to *The Walking Dead* – especially because, with so many different episodes to do, there's been the chance to expand on

printed page to the small screen, Nicotero was one of the first people to be called in.

"Frank and I had spoken about zombies before *The Walking Dead*," states Nicotero. "We both come from the school of 'George Romero is a genius and *Night Of The Living Dead* is the best horror movie ever' and Frank always said, 'I would love to do a show about zombies but I've never found the

"I was going to become a doctor before I went into special effects and *Day Of The Dead* was my first big break. So zombies mean a lot to me!"

the stuff that I've done in other movies. I think you can see that as well, because we have all kinds of different zombie designs on *The Walking Dead*. They're all really unique, and that's a challenge that never wears out its welcome."

Given his experience and enthusiasm, it's understandable that when Frank Darabont started work on adapting *The Walking Dead* from the

right spin on the subject' Then he discovered *The Walking Dead*, and he called me to say, 'Wow, this is great. Do you think we can do this for television and keep all the necessary blood and violence?' Of course, he managed to do that and it's been an absolute dream project to work on."

Despite his wealth of experience, Nicotero was taken aback when he learned just how much »



Nicotero with blood on his hands.



Crash and burn scene from *Diary Of The Dead* (2007).



Nicotero adds the finishing touch.



Captain Rhodes gets picked on in Romero's *Day Of The Dead* (1985).



The results of Dr Logan's experiments in *Day Of The Dead*.

responsibility he would be given on the show, for which he is credited as consulting producer.

"They really wanted to make sure everything got off to a good start," he explains. "A lot of the directors who've been working on the show are fantastic but they don't have a lot of horror experience, so they would look to me and say, 'Okay Greg, how do we do this?' That was cool – and I loved doing the effects work too. Tom Savini taught me something back when I worked with him on *Day Of The Dead*. He said to me, 'The reality is that, when you go to work with your make-up kit, you're carrying your bag of tricks and you have to be the actor, the director and everything else when you set up a good special effect.' I remember being asked, quite early on in *The Walking Dead*, to cut this zombie's head off, but the head had to roll away, and then it had to blink its eyes. Well, visually, that takes an awful lot of planning. For instance, you need to know where to use the rubber head and where blue-screen is going to be needed so that they can bring in some CGI. Special effects involve a huge amount of trial and error, so you need the director you're working with to be patient, but on a show like *The Walking Dead* your time is limited. So it's been one of the most challenging things that I've done."

The dark side

Looking back to the start of his zombie career, when he crafted the carnage for *Day Of The Dead*, Nicotero remembers his initiation into the world of splatter effects was far from glamorous.

"We filmed *Day Of The Dead* in a mine in Pittsburgh during the winter," he sighs. "When we got up for work in the morning it was dark and when we got out at night, it was dark. We didn't see the sun for three months! It was 58 degrees in that mine, and the temperature never changed. Every single one of us got ill at some point. But I had fun, because it was my first film and I was learning my trade from Tom Savini."

But one particular incident still brings back bad memories for the affable effects wrangler. "The production moved to Florida just before Christmas



Nicotero would love to remake 1980's *City Of The Living Dead*.

1984 for 20 days of shooting, then we had ten days off," he says. "However, when we came back to the set in January, what we didn't realise was that the electrical facilities had shut off the power down in the mine. So when we arrived back at the mine it meant that the fridge hadn't been functioning..."

This may not sound like too big a problem, except that the refrigerator in question was holding a bucket load of pig's entrails, designed to be chowed down upon by Romero's creepy corpses.

"I will never forget walking closer to our effects lab, being hit by the smell and thinking, 'Oh my God, this cannot be good!'" Nicotero laughs. "I called my dad, because he's a doctor, and I asked him what we should clean these rancid guts with. He told me to bleach them, so we got a giant bucket and soaked these things in bleach. I was called 'gut boy' by Tom Savini because of this! The bleach killed all the bacteria, but it didn't help with the stench... Well, unfortunately, we still had to get the scene filmed where Joe Pilato [Captain Rhodes] was torn

apart! I felt really sorry for Joe. We all had gas masks on, but he couldn't have that luxury of course, so he was heaving during the filming of his death. If you look closely at that scene in *Day Of The Dead* you can see it in his face. He is not a happy guy!"

Nicotero would return to the Romero fold two decades later, when he jumped on board 2005's *Land Of The Dead* and its 2007 follow-up, *Diary Of The Dead*. At the time, Nicotero found himself having to compete with the new wave of zombie movies, which included the hit remake of Romero's own *Dawn Of The Dead*.

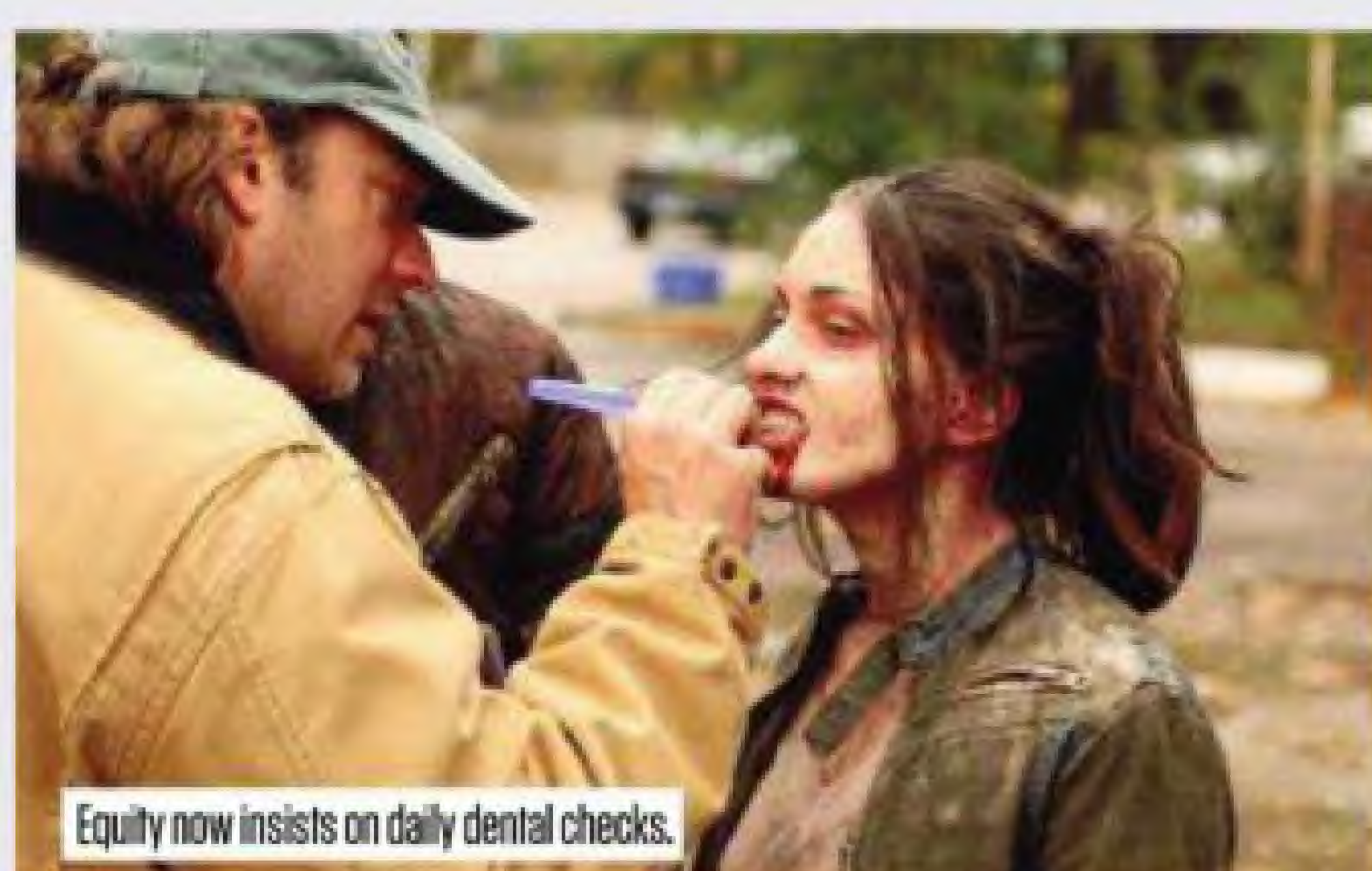
New blood

"Back then I thought that *Shaun Of The Dead* actually had the best zombies," maintains the artist. "I remembering seeing that movie and thinking, 'Wow, I actually believe those could be real dead people.' But, truthfully, I think a lot of it comes down to performance as well – George's zombies have a certain style that differentiates them,

Nicotero gets hands-on with Andrew Lincoln on the set of *The Walking Dead*.



(C) TWD PRODUCTIONS/COURTESY OF AMC



y'know? With *Land Of The Dead* we wanted to move away from the colour palettes that were present in George's other movies so, for example, we never used any blue make-up on anyone. We wanted to make people feel like they'd never seen anything like this."

That new approach also involved using CGI – a first for Romero.

"Yeah, but there was no other way," explains Nicotero. "On *Land Of The Dead* we had anything up to 80 extras and if you want to spurt blood around, instead of adding it later digitally, that means having to take 45 minutes to clean up the set right afterwards. George loves working in his guerrilla style, like he did back on *Night Of The Living Dead*, but, when time is money, CGI can be a really great tool. I also remember having to prepare bloody versions of effects and not so bloody versions because we were really concerned about the ratings board. It wasn't like with *Dawn Of The Dead* where George could say, 'I can just go out unrated with this.' For *Land Of The Dead*, because

it was a big studio picture, we absolutely had to get an R-rating."

A question of loyalty

Nicotero also had a "special effects make-up consultant" credit on Romero's last stab at zombie carnage, *Survival Of The Dead*.

"Listen, I would do anything for George," he says, "but in that case I was tied up with something else, so he would call me and ask for some advice. I even got a 'thank you' card when the film was finished, which was really nice of him. I remember that I gave up the chance to do *The War Of The Worlds* for Spielberg so that I could go out to Vancouver and work on *Land Of The Dead* with him. To me, that was a very special gig.

"George is a director who wants to do as much as possible practically, because that's the old-school method that he's come from. It's a bit like that with *The Walking Dead* too. Frank Darabont said to me, 'We have to try and make everything in this show look as realistic as possible.'

I love it when I'm given that sort of trust."

As to the future, Nicotero's ultimate dream project is yet another zombie-mash: a remake of Lucio Fulci's 1980 film *City Of The Living Dead*.

"I had a great little treatment for that and I took it to Lucio Fulci's daughter, Antonella," he reveals. "I even approached Quentin Tarantino and asked him, 'Would you be willing to lend your name to this?' It was going to be 'Quentin Tarantino Presents *City Of The Living Dead*', and I was going to direct it.

"Antonella was really enthusiastic about it as well, but almost immediately we ran into problems with the rights – it's a little cloudy about who really owns that movie. If we can get that sorted out then that's something I would love to do. I adore Fulci movies, and I can't get enough of zombies, so it's the best of both worlds!"

And to think he was going to be a doctor. 

The Walking Dead season two premieres on FX this October.



MURIEL

An original short story by **David Moody**

Chris Wilkins lay on his bed in his candlelit bedroom, stomach full of food, feeling safe and warm and isolated from everything that was happening outside. Mom and Dad would be proud, he thought to himself. Their youngest son has survived the zombie apocalypse.

The zombie apocalypse.

It still sounded weird when he said it – weird, but undeniably cool too. All those years spent watching movies about the living dead thinking, “What if?” And then, eight days ago, those “what ifs” had become reality. It was bizarre. It was frightening. It was spectacular.

It happened just like they’d always said it would: some kind of virus carried in infected saliva

after having droned on for years about economic downturns, phone hacking, pointless wars, celebrity babies and the like. They’d rolled out all the apocalyptic clichés he’d never thought he’d hear used in the real world:

“Stay in your homes.”

“Isolate the injured.”

“Do not approach anyone that you suspect to be infected.”

Along with the expected bullshit and lies:

“The situation is under control.”

And his all-time favourite (which could almost have been lifted word for word from *Night Of The Living Dead*, or even *Shaun*):

“It has been confirmed that the bodies of the recently deceased are returning to life...”

Another long, quiet night, disturbed only by the occasional scream in the distance and the sounds of creatures scrabbling around outside

and blood, transmitted through bites. Textbook stuff. Outbreaks had occurred in major cities, and the infection had subsequently passed between so many people in such a short space of time that the familiar faces on the TV news hadn’t even begun to talk about causes or cures before they were gone – a flick of a switch and they’d been replaced by the Emergency Network. Chris actually missed the news. He’d got a kick out of listening to stony-faced newsreaders talking about the end of the world

Awesome.

Another long, quiet night, disturbed only by the occasional scream in the distance and the sounds of creatures scrabbling around outside, looking for food. Chris felt remarkably calm. He’d done well to stay alive against the odds. His parents wouldn’t have been best pleased with what he’d done to the house (he’d have to do something about the gouge in the wallpaper on the stairs before they got back) but he was sure they’d understand. He’d »

removed a couple of the interior doors from upstairs and had used them to block the ground floor windows – hence the wallpaper damage – and he'd secured the exterior doors with crossbeams. Blocking the windows properly had been a key decision. He'd never understood why survivors in the movies always used individual planks. Had they wanted the zombies to smash the glass and reach in through the gaps? Bloody amateurs. It hadn't worked for the idiots in Romero's original *Night*, and that was more than 50 years old. You'd have thought someone would have worked it out by now.

Hell of a week Mom and Dad had picked to go away.

They were hiking up around the Lakes. Chris thought they'd probably be safer there in their isolated, stone-built holiday cottage. They never watched horror films, and they'd only have made things more complicated if they'd been here, taking charge and bossing him around as if they knew what they were doing. Dad would have taken forever to do anything, accurately measuring the length of the crossbeams for the doors as if it mattered ("If a job's worth doing, son...") while Mom would have been fussing around the house, vacuuming up the brick dust and making endless cups of tea and sandwiches with scant regard for the levels of their supplies. The day after everything had kicked off Chris had received a single, one-word text message from Dad: SAFE. Did that mean they were safe, or were they telling him to stay safe? Whatever the meaning, the message had been incontrovertible proof that Mom and Dad were okay, but the longer time went on, the louder their silence became. The network had failed altogether yesterday afternoon.

With his older brother Andrew on his gap year, travelling across Australia with his girlfriend, it was all down to him. Chris. All alone. In his bedroom. At the end of the world.

He saw some terrifying things from his window, but the house was warm and safe and quiet inside and he felt detached from it all, almost like he was watching TV.

The first zombie he'd seen (it still felt strange calling them that – wrong almost) hadn't initially looked much like a walking corpse. It had been a girl, probably his age, maybe a little older, and he'd watched her walking away from the house in much the same way he usually stared at girls from his bedroom window. She walked slowly, like she was drunk, occasionally veering off course and tripping up the kerb. But then she'd stopped suddenly just a few metres down from his house, swaying unsteadily, auburn hair blowing in the gentle breeze, her attention caught by something unseen. And then she'd slowly pivoted around on

leaden feet and dived out of view before he could get a good look at her face.

Chris sprinted downstairs and watched through the front door letter flap, desperate to see more. Beyond the gate at the end of his front yard he saw a pair of thrashing legs, which almost immediately stopped kicking and became still. And then the dead girl stood up and lumbered back into view, chewing on a chunk of the poor sod lying twitching at her feet. Her skin was pale and taut, as if it had been stretched over her bones, and her intense eyes were piercing; impossibly alive. Black veins filled with poison crawled up her neck like spider webs, and her chin and the front of her grubby T-shirt were soaked with fresh blood, a startlingly vivid red against the lifeless grey of everything else. She walked away, chewing constantly, overfilling her mouth with flesh as if it was the first thing she'd eaten in years.

The shock of witnessing his first attack wore off surprisingly quickly, and the succession of nightmarish images he subsequently saw from the comfort of the house began to have less and less of an impact. The dead started hunting in packs, great hordes of them dragging themselves down otherwise empty streets like a scene from a Fulci film. Thankfully the proliferation of more easily accessible victims in the homes which surrounded his own meant that he remained unnoticed. The naive idiots directly across the street, for example, were totally unprepared for armageddon. They'd only moved in a couple of months ago, and clearly none of them had ever seen a zombie movie. When the dead caught their scent and began to gather around the front of their house in large numbers, one of them had gone to board up the window. Why they hadn't done it before Chris couldn't understand, because that, of course, had fired the dead up even more. Didn't these people know anything? If the zombies find out where you are, it's too late to start barricading yourself in. All you're doing is turning your home into a prison, not a shelter. Chris despaired. This really was basic stuff.

The people over the road hadn't lasted long. One of the windows had given way under the pressure of more than a hundred zombies trying to force their way inside, and Chris had watched them scramble through the broken glass like starving rats, trampling over each other to be the first to get to the living. One of the survivors had managed to escape – crawling out of a side door on his hands and knees as the dead flooded his home – but he too was quickly killed. He'd only managed to get a couple of metres away before those zombies at the back of the pack noticed and turned on him. Chris watched them tear the man limb from limb, stringing his innards across the street like bloody paper-chains. He'd wanted to grab a controller when the desperate survivor had first appeared,

to try and make him move as if he was playing Xbox. Because if the man had just doubled-back on himself and slipped down the alleyway between his house and next door, he'd have been able to climb onto the dustbins there, then get over the wall and away. Easy. As it was, it was game over, player one: no power-ups, no health boosts, no extra lives.

As each day ended and the next began, the street outside Chris's house gradually became quieter. In fact, he noticed that the whole world had become eerily silent. There were clouds of smoke on the horizon from buildings nearer to the centre of town and the occasional bird flashed across the sky, but other than that, nothing. No traffic. No noise. Zombies would, from time to time, wearily haul themselves along his street in search of food, but they were increasingly few and far between. Was it all over? Chris realised, with something approximating real pride, that he was close to becoming a genuine, bona fide post-apocalyptic survivor. He felt like Robert Neville in *I Am Legend* (the book, that was, not any of the film versions – he was nothing like Vincent Price or Chuck Heston, and he was definitely no Will Smith).

Chris's post-apocalyptic credentials seemed to be increasing almost by the hour. The Emergency Network eventually went off air, and not long after that the power failed. The water supply reduced to a trickle, but he managed to fill the bath, then put a load of buckets and pots out on the flat garage roof to collect rainwater, like he'd seen in *28 Days Later*.

The house phone and his mobile network had long since been down, but his mobile's battery eventually gave up the ghost too. With no way of recharging it, it was useless. It had been bad enough when the internet had died the previous week, but the loss of his phone had brought total disconnection. The fact he hadn't had any communication with anyone else wasn't the problem, it was the fact he now couldn't make contact with other survivors, if there were any. That wasn't good.

Hungry.

He'd not eaten for a while, and his last few meals had been pretty meagre. He needed to find some food and get a few other essentials too. The toilet was backed-up, and the smell in the house was foul. And he had a headache that wouldn't shift. A quick dash to the minimart at the end of the road would be enough. The front door of the store had been left open since last Thursday, and he'd seen no one go in or out. Okay, so it's not the Monroeville Mall, he thought, but it'll have to do.

Chris spent almost an hour getting dressed and tooling up. He raided his dad's stuff: the boiler suit he wore when he worked on the car, gloves and

boots from when he'd had a motorbike (Chris wished he hadn't sold the helmet and leathers), and a facemask and safety goggles from the garage. He took with him the golf club Dad kept at the side of his bed in case anyone broke in, and a long-shafted screwdriver – the best weapons he could find.

Feeling nervous and unwell, Chris let himself out through the side door and crept to the edge of the road. He moved at a painfully slow pace, so slow that he thought he might be overtaken by zombies if there were any of them left about. It was cold outside, and even through the facemask the smell out here was different. Burning. Rotting. Dying. It made his stomach churn. And every step he took sounded disproportionately loud. He felt exposed. For the first time, he felt vulnerable.

Once in the minimart, Chris helped himself to as much food as he could get into the rucksack and holdall he'd brought with him from home. He was sensible, taking stuff that would give him energy and help him stay alive, not just the beer, snacks and magazines he really wanted. Despite all that had happened, he felt an undeniable pang of guilt looting the store, and he didn't want to come back in a hurry. The longer I can stay safe at home, he reasoned, the better my chances. He went deeper into the building to find more bags and take

towards him.

Do it, he yelled at himself. Kill it!

But he couldn't. He couldn't move a bloody muscle.

Muriel?

A flicker of recognition caught him off guard. He had to look twice to see beyond the unnatural colours of decay and the dribbles of blood, pus and other muck which covered her rapidly disintegrating face, but he was sure it was her. Muriel Sparks. Mom's friend who worked in the minimart.

Dead Muriel, her unblinking eyes covered with a milky-white sheen, continued her unsteady advance, gaping black mouth hanging open hungrily, yellow teeth bared, ready to sink deep into his flesh.

"Mrs Sparks, is that you?"

He could see she had on her minimart apron now, the logo and her name tag obscured by crusty yellow-green seepage. The zombie moved again, one bare foot slipping in a puddle of dark brown gore, and he mistook her unexpected lurch forward for an attack and staggered back. He held the screwdriver high, ready to strike, but he still couldn't do it. He imagined sinking the long shaft into Muriel's skull, but he couldn't move.

thing was Muriel Sparks. Mom's friend. The woman who'd looked after him and his brother that week years ago when Mom had been on nights and Dad had gone away on a course. The woman who'd been a dinner lady at his old junior school for as long as he could remember. The woman who'd been in the local paper for beating off an armed robber in the minimart last December...

And now Chris didn't want to be a post-apocalyptic survivor any more. The corpse came at him again and he wished Mom and Dad were here to help him. He wished the power was still on and the TV and phones were working. Wished that all the people in this street were still alive, and that none of this had happened.

Muriel continued to lurch closer. One leaden foot after another. Slow and uncoordinated, but relentless. Determined. Hungry...

"Muriel, please..."

She stopped suddenly as her head exploded, hit from behind by a rock fired at gunshot speed. Chris instinctively shielded his face as a shower of blood and brain splattered over him. He cautiously looked up and lifted his pebble-dashed safety goggles. Much of the left side of Muriel's head had been blown away: her skull smashed outwards, decayed flesh blown apart. She still seemed to be watching him with her one remaining glassy eye as she dropped to her knees, then she finally fell forward, her dead face slapping against the tarmac like a mouldy peach dropped from a height.

Standing in the middle of the road, a few metres behind the twitching corpse, was a small girl with a slingshot. She couldn't have been more than eight.

"Don't you know nothing?" she shouted at him. "That one almost got you. You don't talk to them, you kill them. Bloody hell, ain't you ever seen a zombie movie before?"

It was cold outside, and even through the facemask the smell out here was different. Burning. Rotting. Dying

more stock. Get as much as you can, then get out of here. His legs felt weak with nerves and his pulse raced so hard he could hear it.

And it was in the storeroom that he saw her.

And it was in the storeroom that she saw him.

For a moment Chris remained rooted to the spot with fear, barely able to think straight, eyes locked onto the rotting shell of a woman which stood in the shadows less than two metres away, dripping with decay. He started to slowly back up, hoping she hadn't noticed, but then turned and ran when the foul thing lunged at him. He cursed his stupidity as he burst back out onto the street – the corpse had been safely trapped in the back room for days, and he'd just let it out. He tripped over the outstretched legs of a dead man (just the legs and about half of the torso, nothing else) and landed on his backside in the middle of the road. The zombie staggered out after him and was on him in seconds, moving with predatory speed. He'd left the golf club in the shop along with his looted supplies, but he still had the screwdriver. He scrambled back up to his feet as the grotesque dead woman lumbered

Another unsteady step forward from the corpse sent him tripping back again. She was backing him up towards the house. Don't let her follow you back, he silently screamed, remembering the family over the road and how they'd been slaughtered, and hoping Muriel's rotting brain was sufficiently decayed not to recognise him. He tried to stand his ground when she came at him again, but all he could do was grab her wrists, keeping his arms locked and at full stretch to put maximum distance between him and Muriel's constantly chomping, snapping teeth. Her greasy flesh felt like putty in his grip, flaking apart beneath his fingers and sliding off her bones, and the stench... Christ, her smell was appalling. Only fear stopped him from throwing up.

This was real! One scratch and it's over.

In blind panic, Chris shoved the dead woman back and she tripped over her own feet and collapsed before immediately dragging herself up again. He held out his screwdriver to attack, but he still couldn't use it because, through all the venom and rot, all he could see was Muriel. And suddenly this wasn't a horror film monster any more. This

David Moody

I say, who *is* this Moody chap?



Birmingham author David Moody was ahead of the curve on the zombie-lit explosion. His *Autumn* saga gained over half a million downloads in 2001 and he's since released two more books in the series.

A fourth, *Disintegration*, is due to go on sale in December, from Gollancz. He's also author of the *Hater* series, which has been optioned for film by Guillermo del Toro. Loads more of his stories are on the *Autumn* website, www.lastoftheliving.net. Read our interview with him on page 70.

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Dave

Dave Bradley
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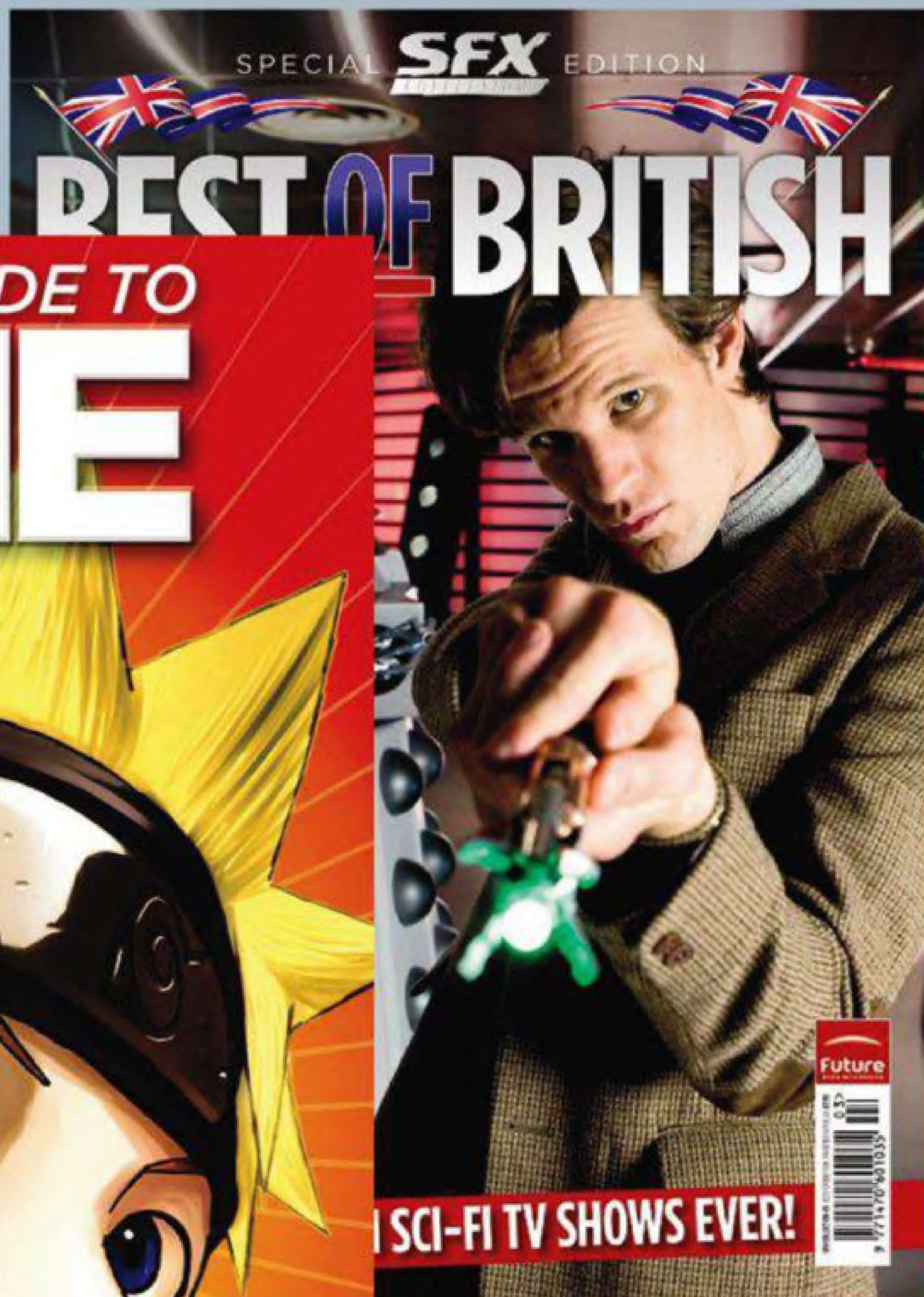


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MERCH OF THE DEAD

Nowadays there are more zombie toys and gifts out there than you can shake a ripped-off arm at! We've scoured the globe and picked out some of the very best





01 This eye-popping **Dead Broke wallet** and **Gold Digger platforms** are just two highlights of a zombie-themed range by Iron Fist Clothing, which also includes flat shoes, sandals, bags, and t-shirts.
www.thealternativestore.net | £24.99/£59.99

02 Slip on these **glow-in-the-dark finger puppets**, made from soft rubber, and only Pete Doherty will still be able to outdo you in the revolting fingers stakes. For goodness sake man, buy yourself a nailbrush!
www.funkyzilla.com | £1.99 each

03 Two samples of Etsy seller CorsoStudio's range of hand-crafted **pewter necklaces**, each of which comes on an 18" chain. Other wordings available include "Zombie hunter", "Walking dead" and "Flesh eater".
www.etsy.com/shop/CorsoStudio | \$12.00 each

04 There are 12,694 zombie items on crafty e-commerce site Etsy. Most are pants – but definitely not this adorable **crocheted zombie bunny**, complete with green fur, missing eye and random blood splatters. Aw!
www.etsy.com/shop/Skeeboo | \$12.00

05 Just two examples of Kleepsville 666's range of **iron-on patches**, which also includes "Zombie", "Zombified", "Zombitch" and "Zombie Barbie". Stick one on your work shirt and see if anyone notices.
www.kleepsville666.com | £2.50 each

06 The perfect gift for punk rock chicks who dig the undead, this **pink zombie necklace** features the word "zombie" cut out in acrylic, in a cursive script that rather reminds us of the Barbie logo.
www.kleepsville666.com | £7.50

07 This **zombie apocalypse victim bear** provides the zombie bunny with some stiff competition in the cuteness stakes. Like the bunny, it's a one-off, but seller dearbitsy will happily make you something similar.
www.etsy.com/shop/dearbitsy | \$15.00

08 Who wants a remote-control car when you can have a walking, groaning **remote-control zombie**? Featuring articulated neck, shoulders and hips, he comes with a brain-shaped remote, and takes three AAA batteries.
www.thinkgeek.com | \$24.99

09 Warm brains are delicious, but eating them is generally frowned upon; fortunately, biscuits are socially acceptable. This capacious **zombie head cookie jar** should help you to fend off the cravings for neural tissue.
www.symbiotestudios.com | \$39.99

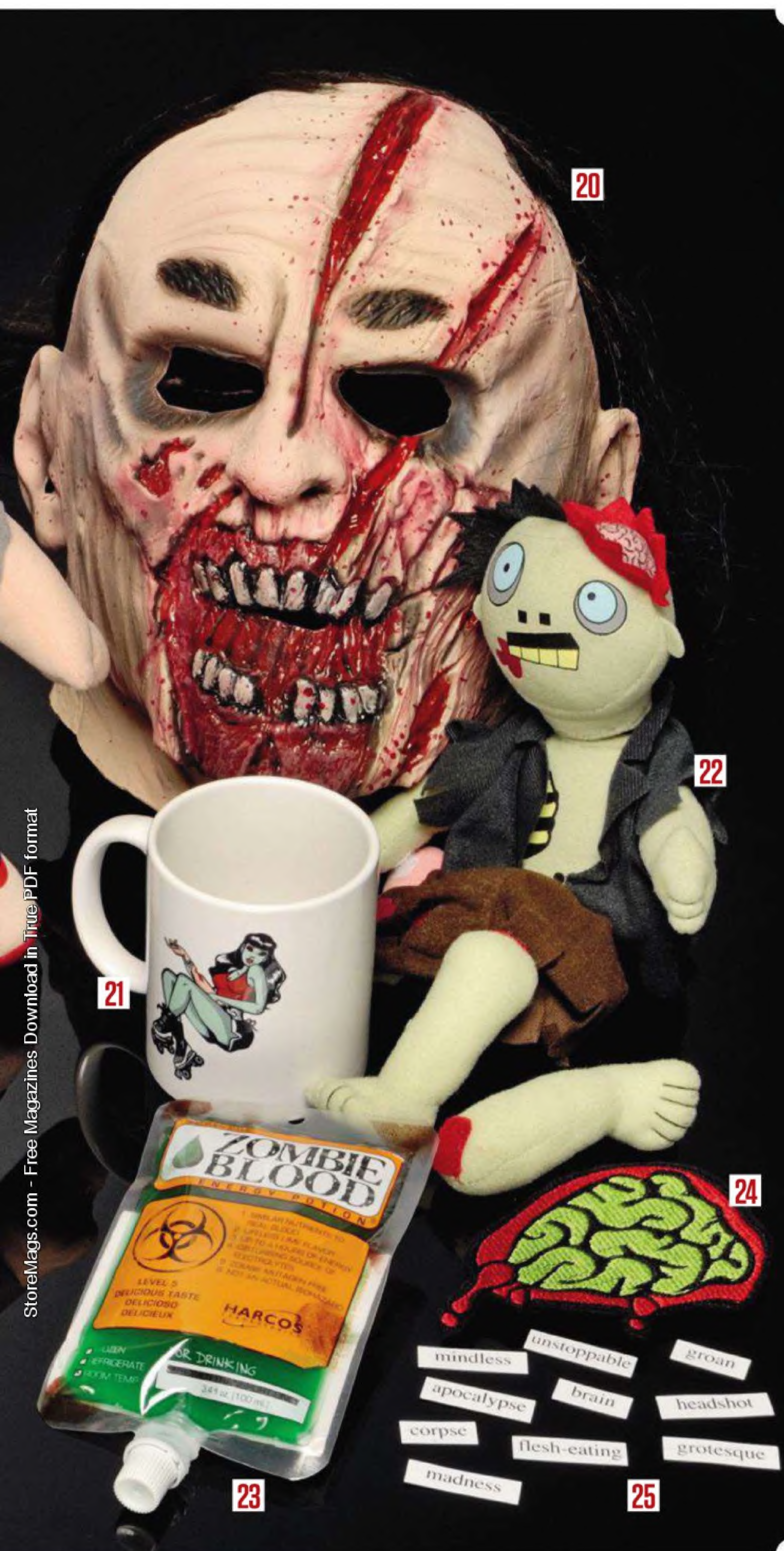
10 This 3/4" **zombie in a bottle** (guaranteed hungry) is sealed inside a wee sawdust-filled packing crate, and comes complete with a length of red thread, ready to be hung up on display.
www.sparklypony.com | \$11.99

11 If, like us, you have to be dragged out of your pit, this **zombie mug** will strike a chord. Dishwasher-proof, it features the words "early morning zombie" on the reverse.
www.genkigear.co.uk | £7.99

12 William Lustig (director of horror flick *Uncle Sam*) knew there was something sinister about this all-American icon. These **Uncle Sam zombie coasters** underline the point – and protect your coffee table to boot!
stores.ebay.com/savage-substance | \$12.00 for four

13 Just a small sample of Sick On Sin's range of **badges, magnets and compact mirrors**, some of which feature characters from Canadian web comic <http://orneryboy.com>. Our favourites: the "Undead Friends" badges of zombie animals!
www.sickonsin.com | Five-pack of badges \$8.50





14 Okay, so the pompadoured rockabilly zombie on this **zombie radio flight bag** is partially obscured – sorry – but hopefully you still get the general idea. British artist Vince Ray's psychobilly-flavoured work also features on a wallet-with-chain available from the same manufacturer. www.sourpussclothing.com | \$29.00

15 Add a dash of gore to the beach with these **zombie flip-flops**, featuring stitch marks and blood squirting from amputated toes. Yeuch. It's almost a shame to actually wear them and cover up the gruesome design! www.sourpussclothing.com | \$12.00

16 We could only squeeze five of them into the photo, but this **flesh-eating zombies playset** features ten figures in total: some walking, some crawling, some rising from the grave, and all made of glow-in-the-dark hard vinyl. www.funkyzilla.com | £21.95 for the set

17 This **Dead Ted plush zombie** stands 18.5" tall and features a pop-out eye and removable trousers (er... we'll leave 'em on, thanks!). He's just one third of a range that also includes a vampire and a werewolf. <http://stuffless.com> | \$19.99

18 This beautifully handcrafted **desktop bowling set** features ten painted wooden pins (four more are not pictured – we just couldn't cram everything in!). If only the undead could always be dispatched by hurling a bowling ball, eh? It'd certainly save an awful lot of ammo. www.thinkgeek.com | \$19.99

19 Talented artist Jason Driscoll is the man behind this **zombies magnet set**, which features four 4" tall figures, all made of hard plastic. Check out his magnet sets of bunnies and, er, Detroit hookers too. www.etsy.com/shop/killtaupe | \$20.00

20 This latex **Walking Dead mask** is one of two just released by Rubies Masquerade: be warned, his Bobby Charlton locks have a tendency to moult. Rubies have also produced three fancy dress costumes, should you fancy pretending to be Rick Grimes or a zombie – whatever turns you on. Incidentally, if you're in the States you can also buy a range of *Dawn of the Dead* masks made by Rubies; sadly, they're not licensed for the UK. Shame. www.joke.co.uk | £35.99-£39.99

21 Stick the keywords "zombie mug" into CafePress.com and you get a staggering 4,220 results. The best we've found: this **zombie roller girl mug**, featuring a beauty with a Betty Page fringe feasting on a ripped-off arm. tinyurl.com/rollerzombie | £11.50

22 Meet the **dismember-me plush zombie**. His body parts are held together by strips of Velcro, allowing you to tear his carcass apart, then reassemble him – and not necessarily in the right order! www.thinkgeek.com | \$12.99

23 Pssst... this **zombie blood energy drink** doesn't *really* contain undead plasma! It tastes of lime, and each 100ml dose (which comes in a resealable transfusion bag) gives you an 80mg caffeine boost. www.firebox.com | £11.19 for a four-pack

24 Ladies, simply strap this **zombie brains headband** accessory to your bonce with the elastic cord attached and you can woo a new beau with a tantalising flash of exposed cerebrum. Who could resist? www.etsy.com/shop/janinebasil | \$23.00

25 A tiny sample here of the 200+ words in the **zombie magnetic poetry kit**, which also includes all the handy linking words you need to compose an apocalyptic epic on your refrigerator door. www.thinkgeek.com | \$11.99


 SCRIBES
OF THE
DEAD

ISAAC MARION

Everybody needs somebody to love – even a *rotting* body, it turns out. **Ian Berriman** talks to the author of *Warm Bodies*

At one point in our conversation, Isaac Marion admits with a wry chuckle that he’s “kinda tired of talking about zombies”. Ah... sorry, man. It’s his own darn fault, though. If he hadn’t penned what’s a strong contender for the best zombie novel ever written (and certainly the most artistic/philosophical), he wouldn’t have to keep fielding questions such as, “Should zombies be able to run?”

Warm Bodies is the book in question. Set around 20 years after an undead apocalypse, its point-of-view character is a zombie known only as R. One day, while out hunting humans, R encounters a young woman called Julie, and something unusual happens: he finds he has feelings for her. This may have something to do with the fact that he’s just consumed her boyfriend’s brains (in a novel spin on flashbacks, feasting on neural tissue gives zombies a “hit” of their victim’s memories, akin to a drug high). After R protects Julie from his fellow walking dead, a relationship slowly develops. It’s a very different take on zombies, not just because Marion’s flesh-eaters have an inner life, or because we see the world through the eyes of one of their number. It’s also beautifully written, brimming with turns of phrase so elegant that they send you scurrying off in search of someone you can read them aloud to.

The original spark for the novel came in a short story, “I Am A Zombie Filled With Love”, which you can read online at www.burningbuilding.com/zombie.htm.

“It started out as this odd experiment that I wanted to mess around with,” Marion explains, “telling a sort of ‘Day In The Life’ of a classical apocalyptic zombie character from his perspective, to see what that would be like. I thought, ‘How come no-one’s ever told this perspective before?’, because it seemed like it might be interesting to know what they were thinking. There have been so many stories about zombies, but they’re always just used as props, to be shot or to jump on people. Considering that they were formerly human I thought they deserved to be a little more studied than that. Then it expanded from there as I started to develop the idea and found more parallels and interesting angles to look at.”

Although he’s written a novel on the subject, Marion doesn’t consider himself a “zombie novelist”. When it comes to

this genre, he’s just passing through. “It’s not really a genre that I would say I was a fan of,” he confesses. “I don’t write in the horror genre on a regular basis. I write a lot of supernatural, strange stories, but they aren’t usually within a specific subculture. So it was an odd choice for me. I was sort of surprised to find myself writing what I was writing, but when I started working on it, I just ended up taking new directions that I hadn’t expected, and I just went with it.”

Quite why the dead have reanimated is never really revealed. “They have some sort of magical, dark energy that keeps them moving,” Marion explains. “I intentionally left it unexplained as to what causes all this stuff because I didn’t want to go into a gritty sci-fi explanation – I just wanted it to be left as something to think about. The mechanism of it is clearly metaphysical in some way, but as to what actually happens to

them, it comes from their personal, internal development, and that slowly leads to an actual physical change.”

Our undead hero can’t remember anything from the time before he became a zombie, except that his name began with the letter R. The only other clue to his human identity is that he’s wearing a smart suit. Did Marion have a clear idea of who R was in life?

“There were a few things that I had in mind that weren’t really relevant for the plot,” Marion reveals, “but that

would show up in the ways that he would describe things. I had the idea that he used to be a photographer, so a lot of the metaphors he uses are based on camera things. But I kinda let it start where it starts, and he’s sort of a blank slate at that point, with maybe a faint trace of who he was before. Mostly his personality builds from the first page, based on his experiences of being a zombie and meeting this girl, and that’s kinda who he is.”

The journey that R and Julie go on is both an emotional and a geographical one. It takes the pair from the abandoned airport where R and his fellow zombies reside to a human settlement within a football stadium. Both communities are ruled by conservative forces who seek to maintain the status quo: near-skeletal zombie elders known as “Bonies” on one side, and a ruthless military on the other.

“The first half explores the zombie world, and then in the second half the characters get things flipped on them and they’re exploring the human world, and it turns out that in some ways it’s not that different. There are definitely some dramatic »

“Zombies are always just used as props, but considering they were formerly human, I thought they deserved to be a little more studied.”



SHORT CUTS

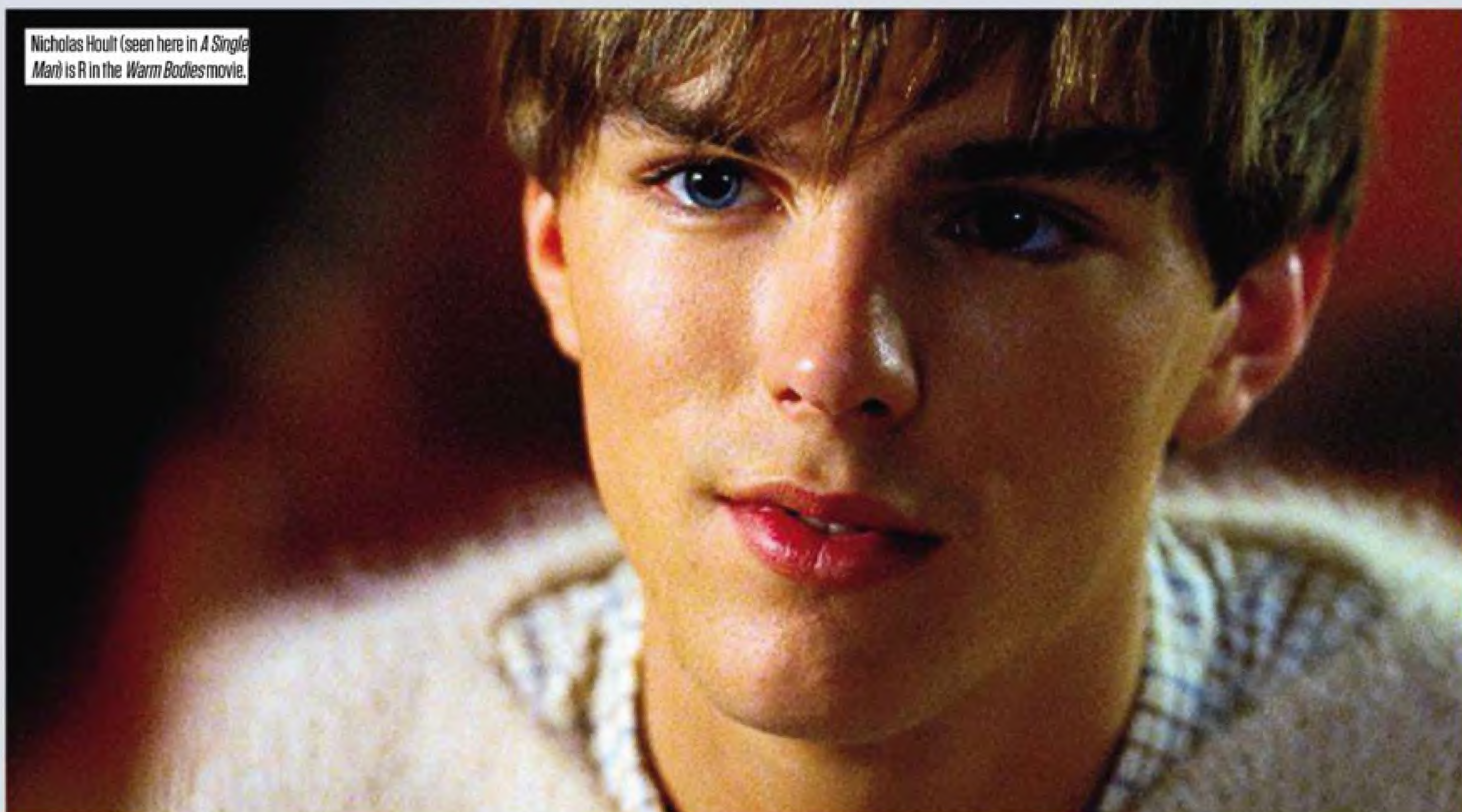
What's next for Isaac Marion?

Marion is returning to the world of *Warm Bodies* in his next book... but it may well be a one-off. "I'm putting the final touches to a collection of short stories called *The Man Who Swallowed The Universe*, one of which is a mini-novel that's a prequel to *Warm Bodies*. But that is probably the last thing I'll be writing in that world."

Don't expect to see R's human identity revealed. "A lot of people have asked me if I would ever write a story about his old life," says Marion, "but I thought about that and realised it wouldn't really make much sense. When *Warm Bodies* starts, he doesn't remember anything about his past, and nothing from his past really becomes significant in the story. Who he was before doesn't really matter, so if we were to see a prequel, the character would be a total stranger to the reader."

So what can we expect from the story (titled "Grass Through the Concrete")? "It's set about nine years earlier, and covers a couple of the characters when they were younger, and their origins. You see a bit of how the zombie apocalypse started – not as much explanation as a lot of people would like, but we see what the world was like at that point."

Although a release via a mainstream publisher will follow, Marion's initial plan is self-publish and sell copies via his website. "Since *Warm Bodies* is the only thing I've had published, people assume, 'Oh, that's that zombie guy', but that's actually only a tiny minority of what I usually write. So I wanted to get this book out there as quickly as possible and show people that I do a lot of different styles, and try not to get pigeonholed on my first outing."



Nicholas Hoult (seen here in *A Single Man*) is R in the *Warm Bodies* movie.



Marion reckons *Shaun Of The Dead* comparisons are wide of the mark.



Yes, there's a relationship, but don't expect "Twilight with zombies" from *Warm Bodies*.

parallels there that I wanted to show; that humans were in danger of becoming just as bad as the zombie hordes in the ways they were trying to survive."

Unsurprisingly, given that Stephenie Meyer's books sell truckloads, the book's central relationship has led to it being labelled as a romance.

"I don't know where this phrase came from," says a somewhat exasperated Marion, "but I've seen it tossed around on the internet, calling it 'Twilight meets *Shaun Of The Dead*'. It's a terrible comparison! I think it sells it short to call it a romance. Especially a romantic comedy – to me, that brings to mind Meg Ryan, and I don't really see this book in that category. I mean, most stories involve a love story of some sort – even action movies will have a pretty girl who ends up kissing the guy at the end, but that doesn't mean it's a romance. In my mind, the relationship in the story is paralleling the larger-scale story of the world that it takes place in."

Warm Bodies is now being made into a movie (at the time of writing, it's gearing up to being shooting in Canada), with Nicholas Hoult of *Skins* and *X Men: First Class* cast as R. Encouragingly, the author has been kept in the loop.

"I've had a surprising amount of involvement," Marion reveals, "especially in the earlier stages – they were pretty respectful of my role. I had lunch with the director and talked about his vision for the project, and I talked to the producer on a fairly regular basis about who they're thinking of casting. They even called me a couple of times to talk about their difficulties figuring out how to do special effects, or to brainstorm ways to visualise stuff that I'd written."

"I got to see an early draft of the script and give notes on it. From what I

hear, it's been an abnormal amount of respect for the writer in this case – usually writers get shoved aside and they do their own thing."

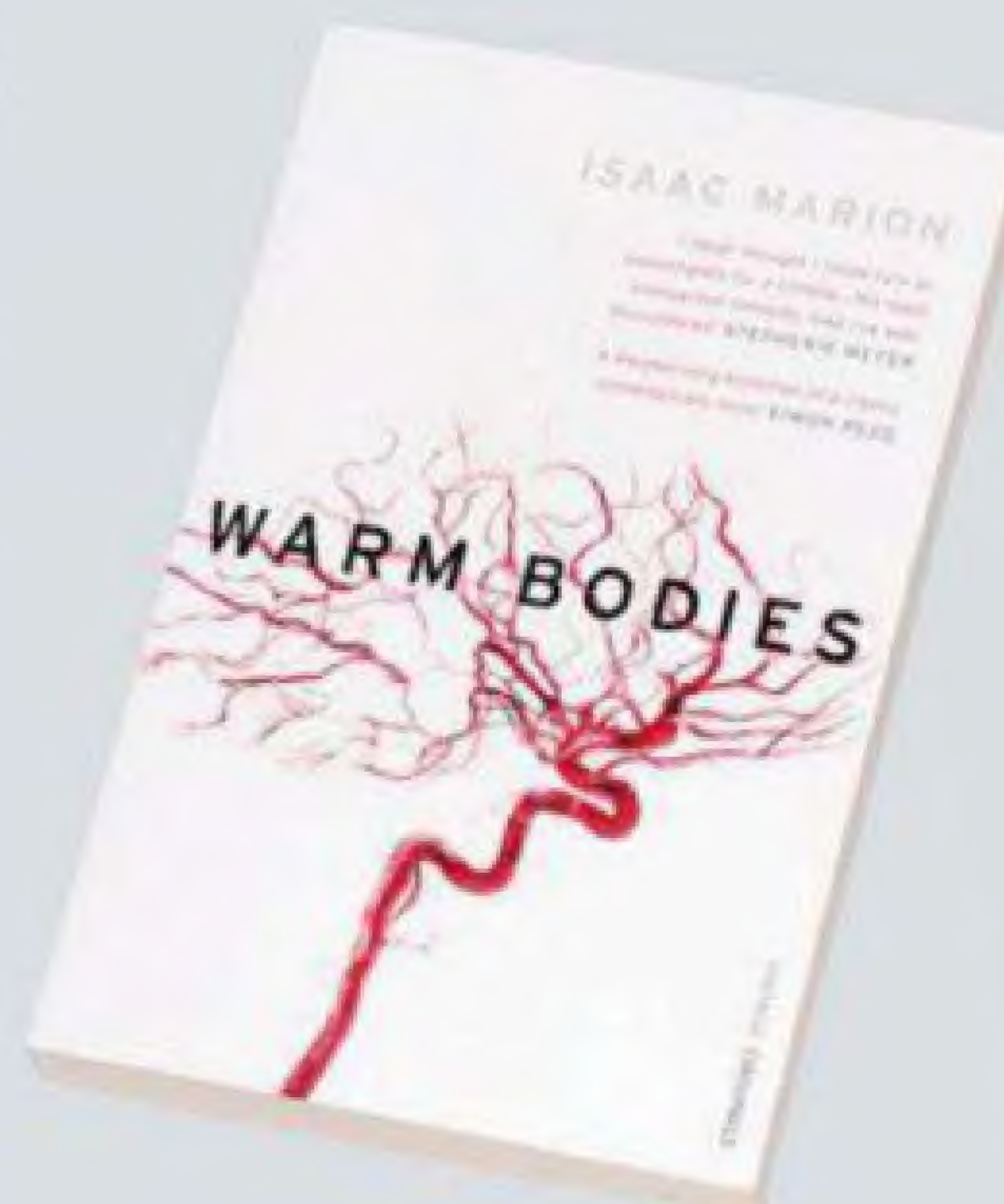
Adapting the book into a movie presents a difficult challenge – it's not often you have a story told from the perspective of a character who struggles to slur sentences of more than three words.

"With the early draft that I read, I was really impressed with how well they managed to capture the tone and feel of the story," Marion says. "Overall I was pretty excited, especially in the early half, with how well they managed to achieve that introduction to this weird world without hours of exposition with people talking about where zombies came from. It just kind of lays it out there in a fun and interesting way."

"So I'm pretty optimistic, and I'm not terrified by what they're going to do with it. I was worried that they'd try and make it some wacky thing, just pull out the few comedy elements in the story and ignore all the serious stuff, but they do seem to be taking it more seriously than that. I mean, I like a big,

fun blockbuster as much as anybody, but my heart is more with indie movies, so my hope is it'll be something more along those lines. I know it's not necessarily going to be an art film, but I would hope that it has that kind of feel: a human touch rather than the machine-produced action movies that you can get."

Keep your fingers crossed that they don't screw it up. If director Jonathan Levine and co do the book justice, the film of *Warm Bodies* could be a *bona fide* classic. **F**



Warm Bodies is available in paperback from Vintage. You can learn more about Isaac Marion's work by visiting the website <http://burningbuilding.blogspot.com>, and follow him on Twitter at @isaacinspace.

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COMING ATTRACTIONS

2012
AND BEYOND

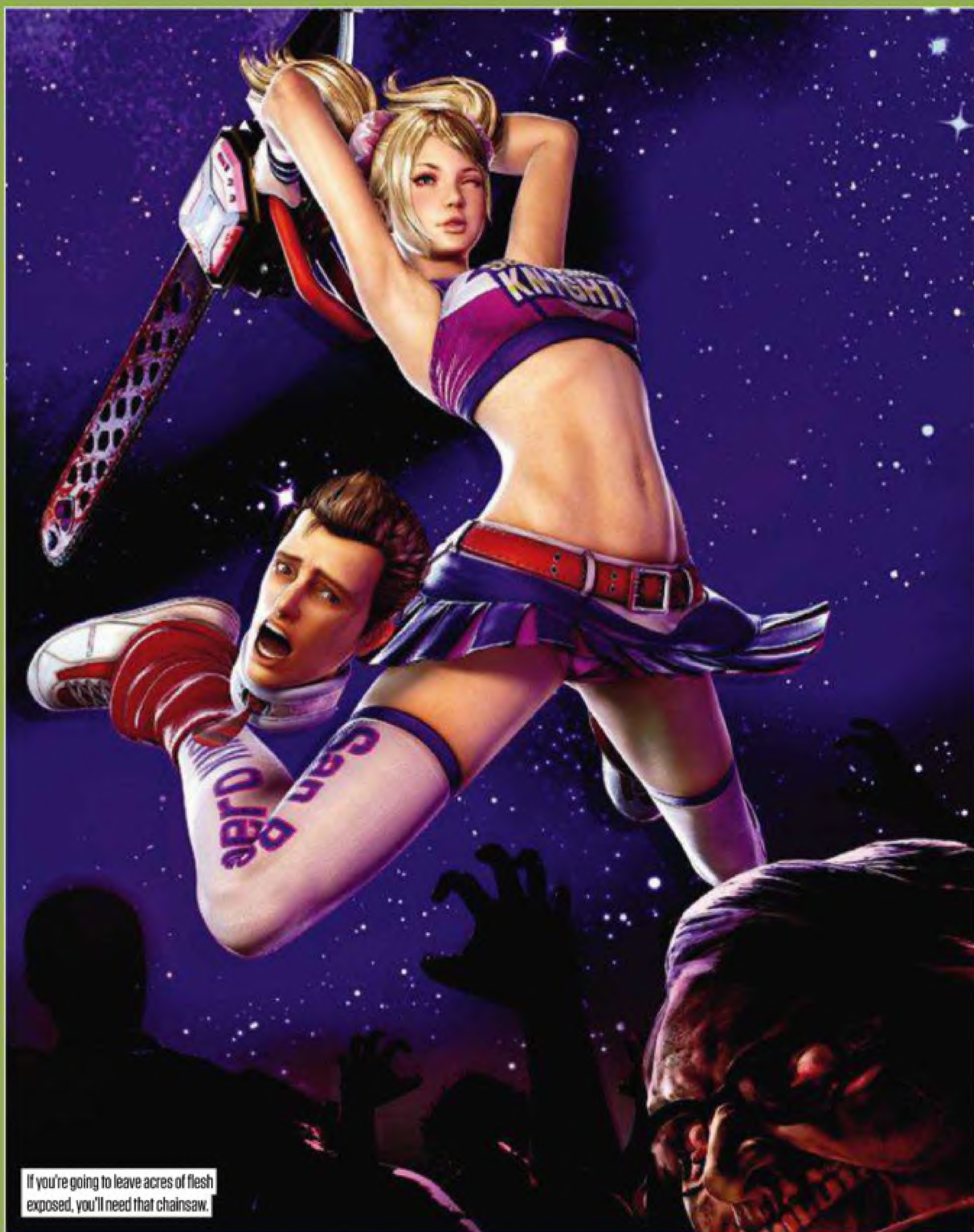
Think 2011 has been a hectic time for all things zombie? Well, next year is shaping to be even busier! **Words: Rob Power/Ian Berriman**



VIDEOGAME

LOLLIPOP CHAINSaw

Cheerleaders are normally natural zombie food, but in forthcoming PS3/Xbox 360 title *Lollipop Chainsaw*, the tables are turned thanks to hard-ass Juliet Starling, a former cheerleader of San Romero High School (see what they did there?), a fictional California educational establishment with a serious undead infestation. Juliet's allies include her family and her boyfriend – all that remains of him is his severed head – while the undead masses are lead by zombie rock and rollers. Excitement's already mounting about this release, and no wonder: with legendary Grasshopper CEO Suda51 involved, quality gameplay is pretty much guaranteed.



If you're going to leave acres of flesh exposed, you'll need that chainsaw.



FILM

OUTPOST II: BLACK SUN

A surprise hit when it was released in 2008, *Outpost* performed well enough to get itself a sequel, and *Outpost II: Black Sun* (shot earlier this year, like its predecessor, in Scotland) looks set to crank the dial marked "Nazi zombies" all the way up to 11. Director Steve Barker returns, this time with a much bigger budget at his disposal. In Eastern Europe, the fruits of a forgotten Nazi scientist's labours – a battalion of stormtroopers – rise from their graves intent on establishing a new Fourth Reich. Out to stop them are investigative journalist Lena (Catherine Steadman); Wallace (Richard Coyle), a man who has been chasing Nazi war criminals for years; and a special forces unit.



FILM

RIPD

Comics provide the basis for another upcoming zombie flick in the form of *RIPD*. Beginning life as a comic by Peter M Lenkov, its transition to the big screen has already bagged some large names, including Ryan Reynolds, Jeff Bridges and Kevin Bacon. The story follows a recently-deceased police officer as he returns from the dead and joins the Rest In Peace Department, where he attempts to track down his murderer. *Red* director Robert Schwentke will be taking the reins – brave of him considering this is a story that literally goes to the depths of hell and back, at least in its comic incarnation. Expect to see this some time in 2013.



VIDEOGAME

RESIDENT EVIL: REVELATIONS

King of the zombie videogames *Resident Evil* is shambling its way to Nintendo's 3DS with *Revelations*, the eighth instalment of the evergreen series. Sticking to the traditional *Resident Evil* over-the-shoulder view, players will have limited ammo (boo) and will have to solve puzzles and explore their surroundings while fighting off the evil dead. The plot follows on from the end of *Resident Evil 5*, just after the establishment of the Bioterrorism Security Assessment Alliance, and centres on Jill Valentine and Chris Redfield. Settings will include a ship and an atmospheric snowy mountain, and there's a new item – the supply scanner – to help you sniff out objects not in plain sight.



BOOK

CLOSURE, LIMITED

Max Brooks is big news now that *World War Z* is being made into a Brad Pitt-starring blockbuster, so it's no surprise that Duckworth is getting another of his books into the shops in February. It's a slim volume (under 100 pages, for the appropriately low price of £4.99) collecting four short tales. The title story interviews the head of a company dedicated to finding emotional closure for survivors of the zombie war by assassinating their former attackers. Brooks fans should bear in mind, however, that this particular tale previously saw print last year in Christopher Golden's bumper collection *Zombie: An Anthology Of The Undead*.



FILM

COCKNEYS VS ZOMBIES

If *EastEnders* is any indicator, cockneys ought to be capable of handling a few walking corpses. Rejected by professional geezer Danny Dyer on the basis of the title (the muppet!), and shot this year in East London (see our set visit feature on page 64), *C vs Z* was penned by *Severance* and *Doctor Who* writer James Moran, who sums it up thusly: "*Cockneys vs Zombies* is a feelgood horror comedy, made with passion. We've got zombies, cockneys (young and old), swearing, gore, guns, gore, headshots, gore, explosions, and Richard Briers with an Uzi. They're old-school, slow zombies too. Whether you want to see the movie or not, if the thought of Richard Briers with an Uzi doesn't appeal, then we can't be friends. Briers. Uzi. Together at last!" We're sold.



FILM

WARM BODIES

It's not every day that zombies get to play the romantic lead, but in *Warm Bodies*, adapted from Isaac Marion's novel (for more on which, see page 120), that's exactly what happens. When R chows down on the contents of a young man's head, he forms an unlikely connection with his lunch's girlfriend in this bizarre yet strangely sweet tale. *X-Men: First Class* graduate Nicholas Hoult will take the role of the love-struck R, while Teresa Palmer (*I Am Number Four*) and Rob Corddry (*Hot Tub Time Machine*) have been cast as his love interest and undead buddy respectively. Jonathan Levine is in the director's chair.

FILM

WORLD WAR Z

Perhaps the biggest upcoming zombie project of them all, *World War Z* is already getting a lot of dead-head tongues wagging. Based on Max Brooks's novel, the movie is being directed by Marc Forster (*Quantum Of Solace*) and stars Brad Pitt, with a script by J Michael Straczynski and Matthew Michael Carnahan. Filming recently took place in Glasgow (doubling for Philadelphia) and Cornwall. Early indications are that this could well be a contender for one of the best zombie movies ever, with leaked early versions of the script sending bloggers into a frenzy. The plot appears to centre on Pitt as Gerry Lane, a UN representative who's travelling the world attempting to prevent a global zombie apocalypse.



©PHOTO:REXFEATURES

Glaswegian Buckfast supplies run low... sorry, *World War Z* strikes Philadelphia



FILM

BEFORE DAWN

Probably the last thing to pop into your head when thinking about zombies is *Emmerdale*, that sleepest of soap opera locations. However, thanks to Dominic Brunt (or Paddy the vet, as he's known to soap fans) and his obsession with the undead, we'll be hearing the two words together plenty in 2012. *Before Dawn*, directed by and starring Brunt alongside Nicky Evans (formerly Roy Glover in the soap), and produced by *Colin* director Marc Price, follows the calamitous weekend break of a couple who are trying to save their relationship, but find themselves in the midst of an undead uprising. The first shots of the zombies to emerge have been spectacularly bloody, and with Brunt promising buckets of gore, don't expect any small-screen gentility here.



BOOK

PLAGUE TOWN

April sees the release of the first in a new series centred on ass-kicking zombie hunter Ashley Drake, which is being marketed as "*Buffy meets The Walking Dead*", and has been described by zombie novelist Jonathan Maberry as "required reading for the deranged". When a viral pandemic breaks out, Ashley discovers she's a "Wild-Card" – someone immune to the virus – and is recruited to join the fightback. Author Dana Fredsti has some impressive form when it comes to horror: she was an armourer's assistant and swordfighting Deadite on the third *Evil Dead* movie, *Army Of Darkness*! *Plague Town* originally saw the light of day as an ebook entitled *Ashley Drake, Zombie Hunter: A Plague On All Houses*, but is being substantially revised for its release by Titan Books.



FILM

ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE

It may only be a working title at the moment, but *Zombie Apocalypse* seems determined to bring something new to the genre – in this case, mixed martial arts and a red-hot up-and-coming director in Chee Keong Cheung, who's also had a hand in the script, alongside Mark Strange and Steve Horvath. Carlos Gallardo and Kevin Eastman (of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* fame) are producing, and if all goes according to plan we can expect an avalanche of *Zombie Apocalypse* tie-ins, with a trilogy of films, graphic novels and a range of merchandise tie-ins already planned. Put us down for the bobble-heads.



FILM

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES

It's been an attention-grabbing (not to mention million-selling) book and a bestselling graphic novel, so it was only a matter of time before Seth Grahame-Smith's zombie apocalypse/Jane Austen hybrid made it to the big screen. Currently in pre-production, *P&P&Z* will be directed by Craig Gillespie, helmer of the recent *Fright Night* remake, while *Buffy* writer Marti Noxon (who collaborated with Gillespie on that movie) has had a hand in the script. If the books are anything to go by, we can expect a mix of Austen's impeccable characterisation and social observations, while seeing Mr Darcy complete an unlikely transformation into an offish zombie hunter.



FILM

[REC]³ GENESIS

Returning for a third instalment, the *[REC]* franchise continues to give documentary-style zombie movies (okay, okay, Infected movies) a good name. In *Genesis*, the virus that's the source of the trouble goes on the move, interrupting a wedding and causing all sorts of carnage. A teaser image of a grotesquely bloated and bloody lady-zombie indicated this is going to be a movie strictly for those with a strong constitution. Directed by Paco Plaza (who co-wrote and co-directed the first two *[REC]* films), the majority of the action will take place in daylight, as opposed to the claustrophobic darkness of the previous instalments, while the plot is said to tie together the stories of the first two films while setting up a fourth, *[REC]: Apocalypse*.



STAGESHOW

HOW TO SURVIVE A ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE

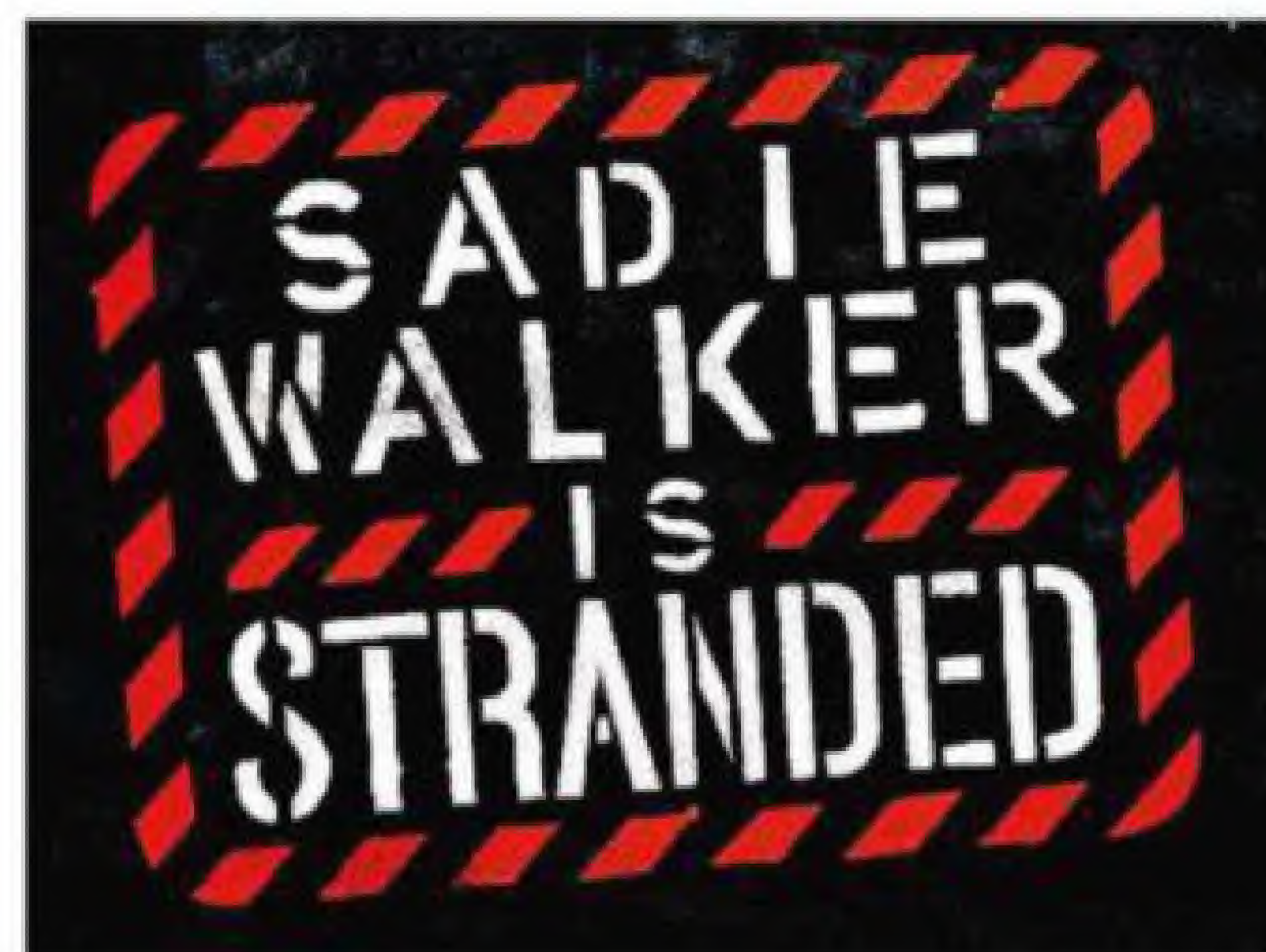
The revamped *How To Survive A Zombie Apocalypse* stage show will be hitting the road once again in 2012, after a successful outing at the Edinburgh Fringe. Testing the audience to see if it has even the slightest chance of surviving when the inevitable occurs and the dead walk the earth again, the show will be appearing across the UK from Inverness to Brighton and pretty much everywhere in between. It's largely improvised, but expect plenty of laughs, audience participation and just enough education from Dr Dale Seslick to get you through humanity's darkest hour. This is the third and final incarnation of the show, so make sure you see it before time runs out, or you'll find yourself on the menu come Z-day.



FILM

JUAN OF THE DEAD

Replacing north London with Havana and Pegg and Frost with a pair of underachieving Cuban locals, this zom-com in the vein of *Shaun Of The Dead* unleashes zombies on an all-new location: modern-day Cuba. As the 50th anniversary of the Revolution is being celebrated, the undead rise, and local loser Juan establishes a small business as a zombie-smasher par excellence. Written and directed by Argentinian Alejandro Brugués, it's Cuba's first full-length horror film since the Communist revolution there in 1959. Brilliantly, it also scared the living daylights out of Havana's bin men, who found a discarded zombie head in the rubbish and called the police! The film screened recently at the Toronto Film Festival; we're crossing everything for a DVD release over here next year.



BOOK

YET MORE BOOKS

2012 will see a host of literary series continuing. In January, Madeleine Roux's *Allison Hewitt Is Trapped* (a blogger's view of the zompocalypse), gets a sequel. *Sadie Walker Is Stranded* is set in a fortress Seattle rife with crime, cults and black-marketeers, several months after the outbreak. When fanatics damage the city's protective wall, the heroine must escape by sea. June will offer *Blackout*, the conclusion of Mira Grant's *Newsflash* trilogy, and close the late ZA Recht's *Morningstar Strain* series with book three, *Survivors*. Autumn will bring *Doll Parts* from Snow Books, a follow-up to Wayne Simmons's *Drop Dead Gorgeous*, and efforts by Charlie Higson (*The Enemy*), David Moody (*Autumn*) and Jonathan Maberry (*Rot And Ruin*). We can also expect: a follow-up to Stephen Jones's 2010 "mosaic novel" *Zombie Apocalypse*; two more *Walking Dead* tie-ins; further additions to Abaddon's *Tomes Of The Dead* line; and more of Isla Bick's Young Adult series *Ashes*. Phew!



FILM

JESUS HATES ZOMBIES

Based on a comic series by Stephen Lindsay, *Jesus Hates Zombies* envisions a near-future Earth in the overrun by undead hordes, prompting God to send down his son to unite humanity and save the world. Featuring a zombie-massacring messiah, Elvis and Abraham Lincoln, this could run away with the award for Most Bizarre Zombie Film Ever; at the very least, it's sure to upset a few religious types who aren't keen on the Son Of God kicking ass and taking names. It's the directorial debut of *Skyline* and *Haven* actor Eric Balfour, who's been raving about the script (by Michael Mongillo and Jason Alan), online for some time. God is yet to be cast.

COMPETITION

ARROW VIDEO

WIN! DVDs of three classic zombie movies

If you read *SFX* regularly, you'll know that we often rave about Arrow Video releases. This is a company that lavishes attention on the packaging and extras of its horror DVDs. Well, a trio of classic zombie movies from the catalogue has just been reissued in new cases, and we've got sets of all three to give away to six lucky readers.

If you've been paying attention to this here mag, you'll know *Dawn Of The Dead* is number one in our list of the top 66 zombie films. George Romero's 1978 classic shows what happens when a group of survivors holes up in a shopping mall. Mixing action, humour and an attack on consumerism, it's a must-own for any self-respecting zombie fan. *Day Of The Dead*, his 1985 follow-up, is brilliant too. Following a mixed group of civilian and military survivors sheltering in

a bunker, it's an unremittingly bleak film that also features, in the shape of Bub, a partially "domesticated" zombie, probably the best undead character of all time. Finally, there's Italian director Lucio Fulci's 1981 horror *The House By The Cemetery*. Banned as a video nasty in the early '80s, it sees a couple moving into a New England house, only to discover the living remains of a previous resident – a mad doctor – lurking in the cellar. Yikes!

Both *Dawn* and *Day* are also available on Blu-ray, with a Blu-ray release of *The House By The Cemetery* on its way in 2012. Visit www.arrowfilms.co.uk to learn more about Arrow's range. To be in with a chance of winning all three DVDs, text in one of the answer codes opposite, or enter online at www.sfx.co.uk/category/competitions.



QUESTION: Who directed the 2004 remake of *Dawn Of The Dead*?

- A) James Gunn (text SFXARROW A to 87474)
- B) Tom Savini (text SFXARROW B to 87474)
- C) Zack Snyder (text SFXARROW C to 87474)

Competition opens 26 September and closes at midnight on 22 November.

COMPETITION

THE DEAD

WIN! A DVD of *The Dead*

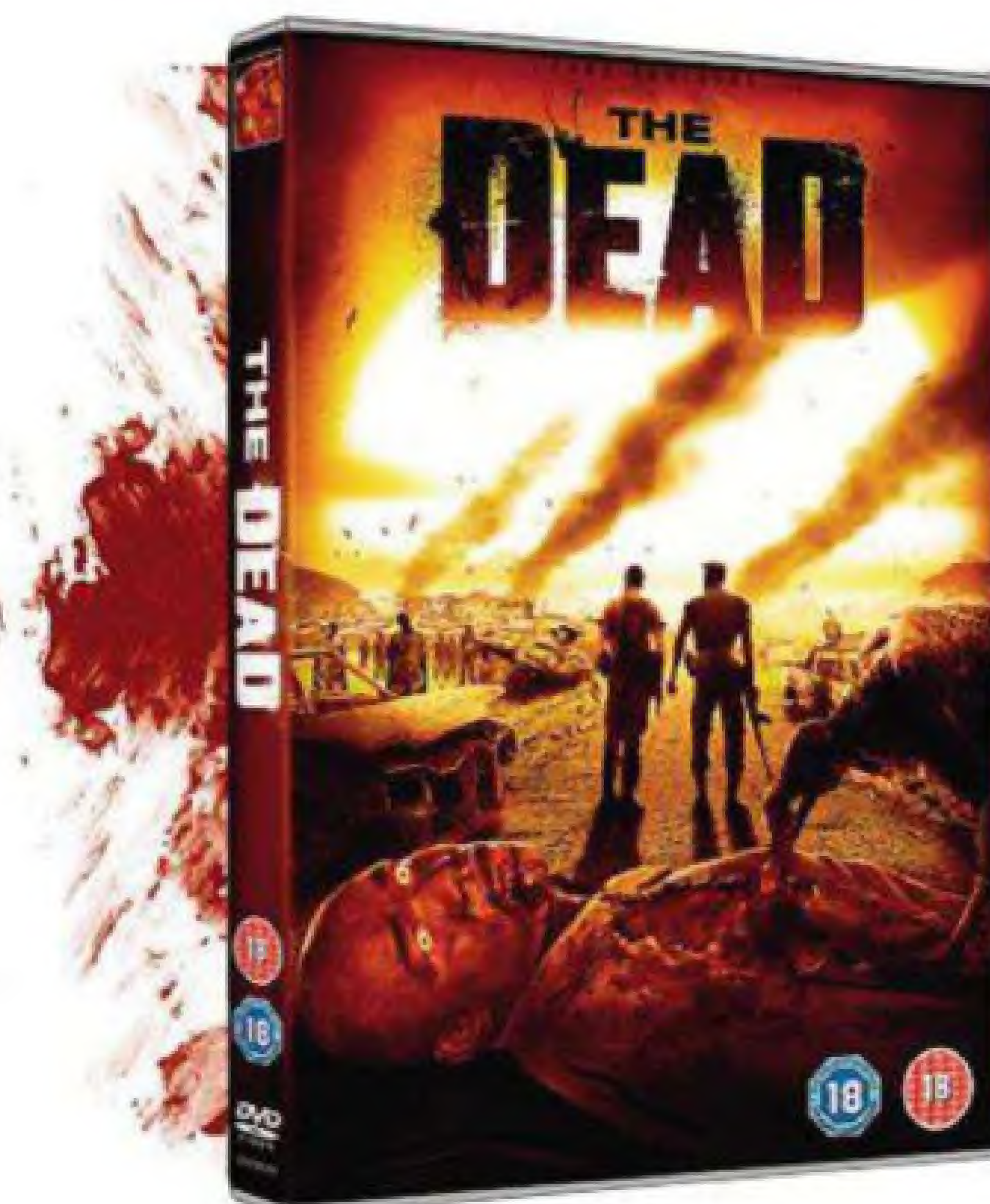
New movie *The Dead* comes in at a highly respectable 31st place in our rundown of the top 66 zombie films of all time, which is pretty darn impressive considering that means it's tucked between Lucio Fulci's infamously nasty *Zombie Flesh Eaters* and 2009 Hollywood smash *Zombieland*. That's not bad going.

The Dead sees a zombie apocalypse unfolding among the rolling dunes of the West African desert. When an evacuation flight crash-lands, an American military engineer is stranded in the middle of an outbreak of the undead, and teams up with a local soldier who's deserted his unit to search for his son.

By all accounts, the crew put their lives and sanity on the line to complete the film, having to contend with everything from

malaria to police corruption. But it paid off, because the setting means you'll never have seen a zombie film quite like this before. Thanks to seriously gruesome effects and some stunning scenery, *The Dead* is our favourite zombie horror of 2011. Don't just take our word for it, though: check out the trailer at <http://thedeadduk.webeden.co.uk>.

The film will be available to buy on both DVD and Blu-ray from 10 October, and because we enjoyed the film so much we were determined to get hold of some freebies to share with you. Thanks to Anchor Bay Entertainment, we have copies of the DVD to give away to 20 lucky readers. To be in with a chance of winning one, simply text in one of the answer codes opposite, or enter online at www.sfx.co.uk/category/competitions.



QUESTION: Which of these horror films is also set in Africa?

- A) Razorback (text SFXDEAD A to 87474)
- B) Dust Devil (text SFXDEAD B to 87474)
- C) KM 31 (text SFXDEAD C to 87474)

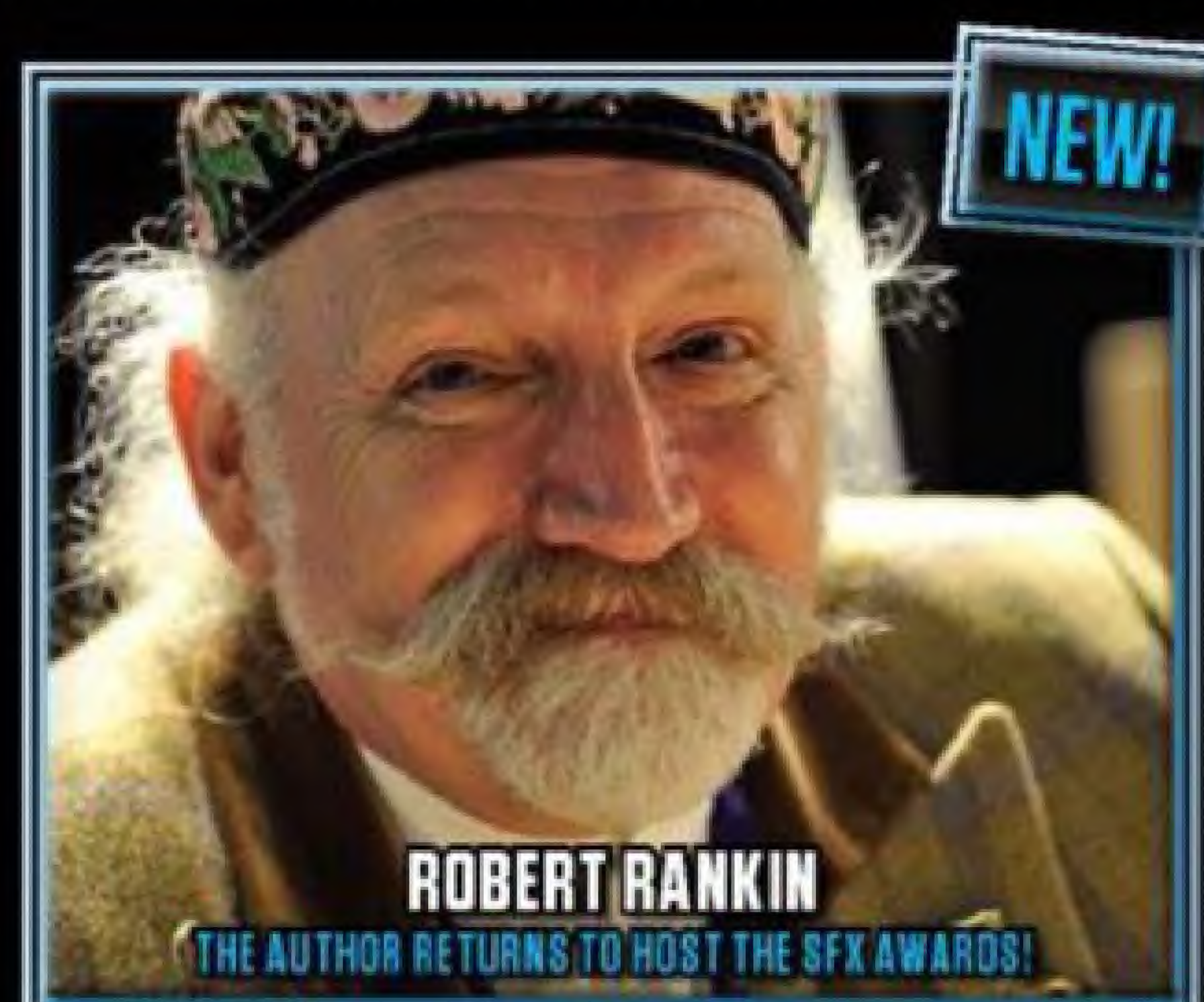
Competition opens 26 September and closes at midnight on 22 November.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: To enter *SFX* competitions you can either: (a) text your answer to 87474 at any time (using the codes above) from 26 September until midnight 22 November 2011; or (b) you can enter online at www.sfx.co.uk between 26 September and midnight 22 November 2011. Prize is as stated and cannot be transferred or refunded. No cash alternative will be offered. This competition is only open to people aged 18 or over. The winners will be selected at random from all the correct entries received between the relevant dates and winners will be notified within 28 days of the closing date. Winners will be required to give details of a delivery address in the UK to which prizes should be sent. Texts will be charged at 50 pence, plus your normal network tariff. Free entry, as well as full terms and conditions, are available online at www.sfx.co.uk, but please note that we can not accept postal entries. Unless otherwise stated, *SFX* competitions are open to all UK residents of 18 years and over, except employees of: (a) the company; (b) any third party appointed by the Company to organise and/or manage the Competition; and (c) the Competition sponsor(s). By entering this competition, you consent to us using your personal details to send you information about products and services of Future which may be of interest to you. If you do not want to receive this information, please include the word "NO" at the end of your text message entry.

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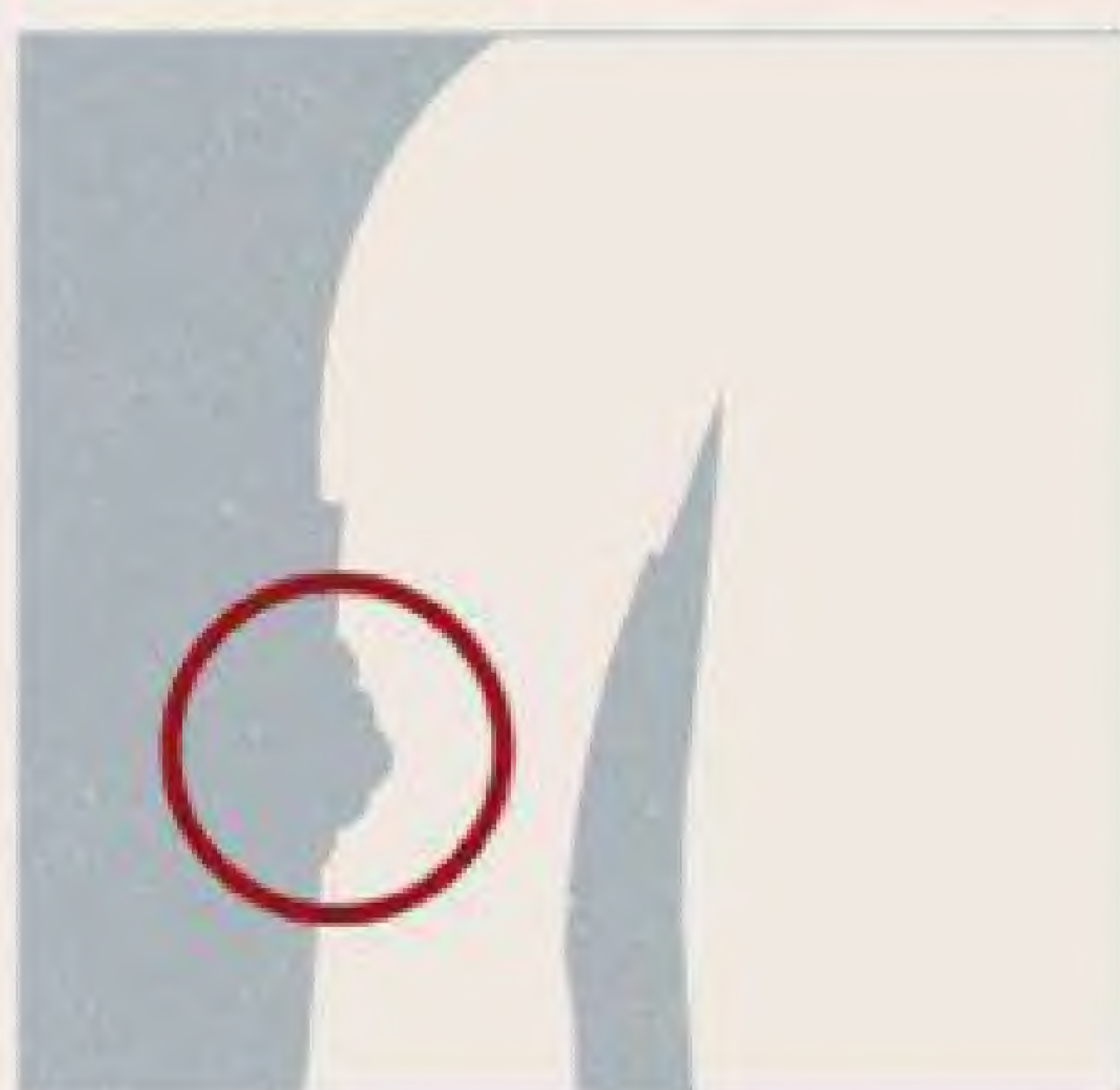


OFFICIAL ADVICE BY THE MINISTRY OF UNDEAD AFFAIRS



SURVIVING THE ZOMBIE OUTBREAK

IDENTIFYING A ZOMBIE



- VISIBLE WOUNDS (THESE MAY INCLUDE BITE MARKS)
- SIGNS OF DECAY OR THE SMELL OF ROTTING FLESH
- SLOW MOVEMENT
- LIMP LIMBS
- LACK OF SPEECH (ZOMBIES CANNOT TALK)
- UNUSUALLY COLOURED PUPILS

THE ZOMBIE INFECTION



- THE ZOMBIE INFECTION IS CAUSED BY A VIRUS OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN
- IT IS TRANSMITTED BY BITES
- THERE IS NO KNOWN CURE
- ASSUME THAT BITE VICTIMS WILL BECOME ZOMBIES
- ALL BITE VICTIMS SHOULD BE ISOLATED AND SECURED

MAKING DWELLINGS SAFE



- TRY TO GET TO AN ELEVATED POSITION (ZOMBIES CANNOT CLIMB)
- LOCK ALL DOORS AND BOARD-UP ALL WINDOWS
- STAY ALERT! KEEP AWAY FROM WINDOWS IN CASE ZOMBIES BREAK THROUGH
- KNOW YOUR EXITS – ALWAYS LEAVE AN ESCAPE ROUTE

DESTROYING ZOMBIES



- ZOMBIES CAN ONLY BE STOPPED BY DECAPITATION OR DESTRUCTION OF THE BRAIN
- DAMAGE TO ANY OTHER PART OF THE BODY WILL, AT BEST, ONLY SLOW THEM DOWN
- DO NOT HESITATE! UNDEAD FRIENDS AND FAMILY ARE NO LONGER PEOPLE, BUT WALKING CORPSES

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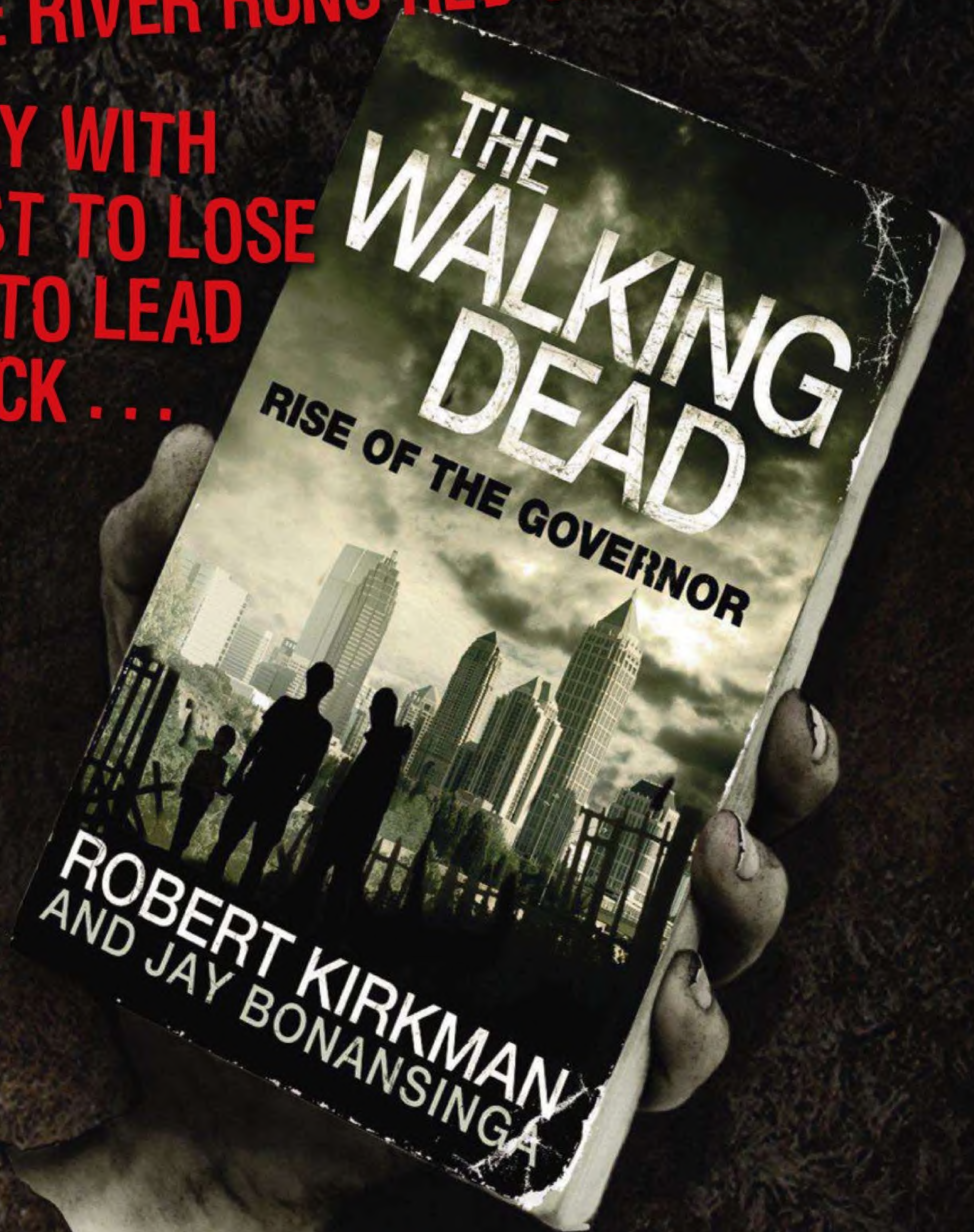


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AND THE RIVER RUNS RED WITH BLOOD,**

**THE GUY WITH
THE MOST TO LOSE
GETS TO LEAD
THE PACK . . .**



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